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time. The text for this is the extraordinary passage in *Zoroastrian* in which revenge is defined as the will's resentment against time and time's "it was". The will cannot will backwards, it has no control over what has been done. Bloom takes this to mean that the will tries to substitute "it is" for "it was", but he goes further to say that the poetic will needs to make another outrageous substitution, of "I am" for "it is".

It was: It is: I am. We have here, as I see it, the figure of Bloom's poetics. The poetic will never goes out of itself, is never quiet in deference to anything to which it says "Thou". Bloom's indifference to such a statement is easily explained: acknowledgement is too close to knowledge for a critic who construes tropes as tropes of willing, not of knowing. He has no interest in a Deconstructive account of Language as "endlessly doing our writing for us": the notion of transferring one's will to a force called Language is to him more fully. If there are texts without authors, Bloom is indifferent to them. Reading *Paradise Lost*, we restore our perspective "to the agonistic image of the human which suffers, the human which thinks, the human which writes, the human which means". In the "Dejection" Ode it is Coleridge: "and not language" - who cries out: "And still I gaze - and with how blank an eye!"

A Jewish Onosic, then, is trying to force us from epistemology into pragmatism; because pragmatism is what his zeal reaches to, when he thinks of "the human" in its practical, political, Emersonian character. His current theme is: the use of poetry and the use of criticism, assuming that poetry and criticism are one and the same. "Use" points Bloom, since he is as American as he is Jewish, and Onosic, toward the Emerson of "Self-Reliance" and "Experience", and thereafter toward the notion of theories as instruments in a sense congenial to William James, Peirce, Dewey, and Kenneth Burke. Reviewing two progress reports, I will summarize Bloom's current emphasis somewhat along these lines. Pneuma, not psyche; so it doesn't matter to Bloom if the psyche is deconstructed to a trace of a trace. Power, not knowledge; as "presence is what Emerson and Shelley called power".

Happening, not Being. As for will and imagination, which Yeats insisted on distinguishing, the distinction was meaningless to Bloom, except that talk of imagination is too ideal for his liking, and in any case the imagination is subsumed in "the poetic will". "A criticism that does not will, whether in action or desire, is something other than criticism," says Dryden. Samuel Johnson, Hazlitt, Ruskin, Emerson, Pater, and Kenneth Burke are taken to represent and define criticism in our language. But if Arnold and Eliot were to be taken as defining criticism, that would be a different story and, in Bloom's vision, a different criticism. One. It is the highest praise for Bloom to say of Emerson's tropes that they are to be read "as figures of will, and not figures of knowledge, as images of voice and not images of writing". "An aggressive image of voice", Bloom affirms, "will resist successfully all deconstruction". I take it that this, too, issues from Bloom's humanism, and produces the assertion, in an essay on Ashbery, that "there must be still, even in Kafka and in Ashbery, what there always was in Keats, the hope, however forlorn, of open vision, and of a passage to other selves".

There are two new affirmations in *Agon* and *The Breaking of the Vessels*: or at least two theses more insistent than before. Proud is the first. The second is that Bloom now finds the crisis-poetry of the period from Blake and Wordsworth to now but in all the poetry that matters; it is "crucial in Euripides confronting Aeschylus or in Petrarch dreaming about Dante". This development has the incidental merit of releasing Bloom from the task of finding historical causes for the modern anxiety and the more particular task of explaining why, in Goethe, Eliot, and other poets, no such anxiety of influence or belatedness seems to arise. But the chief merit is that it gives Bloom a better chance of establishing a functional poetics, rising from nothing but a catastrophe theory of Creation.

I welcome the new books because they give us a breathing space and time to see what Bloom has been doing, and

where he seems to be going. The most valuable achievement of his books is, for me, that they offer a far more engaging poetics than anything proposed by Deconstruction, which has now settled into its repetitive posture. On the other hand, Bloom hasn't validated his values, he has merely urged them. If a reader finds them convincing, it can only be because he finds them stirring or beautiful or charming, or because he divines that Bloom's personality or his poetics have any or all of these attributes. He believes the doctrine by which the man (My position is that I like the man, and find his speculative instruments thrilling, but I don't want to use them even to the extent of severing from them.) Or a reader could find Bloom's poetics persuasive if what he wants in a poem is the aggressive substitutions by which "It was" yields to "It is" and the yielding doesn't stop till it reaches the self-satisfied vertigo of "I am".

I have another problem with Bloom. I have referred to his humanism and quoted, I think, enough to let it disclose its character. Indeed, his position doesn't differ much from that of the unfashionable American humanists, Babbitt, More, Forster, and others, who caused such a stir of argument with Allen Tate, Marjorie and their kin in Eliot's *Criterion* fifty years ago: an unresolved argument, by the way. Bloom isn't concerned with knowledge, so he doesn't even raise the question of its limits. Reading *Agon*, I kept recalling the moment in Yeats's *The Resurrection* when the Syrian says: "What if there is always something that lies outside knowledge, outside order? What if the irrational return?" When Bloom quotes Stevens, I remind myself that it was Stevens who said that there are times in which "the will demands that what it thinks be true". Bloom isn't troubled by this demand, or by the question of knowledge and its limits. "Is even the daemonic truly other than human, however uncanny?" he asks. I take it that the daemonic is a name for what cannot be named. But Bloom seems to affirm that there is a name for everything. Perhaps he thinks, too, that the will goes all the way, whatever knowledge does.

These questions make a difference to Bloom's criticism. He is concerned with words only as instruments of will, and he is content to leave on one side any attributes of words which persist beyond their concerned with the echoes and recesses of words or with the way words can be linked to make not only thought but the rhythm of thinking. He doesn't ask how one's knowledge comes to be, or how our feeling gets into the words we speak, animating them. In *The Breaking of the Vessels* he says that his kind of reading "does not know a poem as being apart from the poem it enacts". (I must declare an interest and report that he says this to rebut an argument of mine in my *Reading of Auden*; and that he has misread me in the process.) But if a reading doesn't know a poem as being apart from the poem it enacts, what prevents the reading from reducing the poem to that upon? Bloom wouldn't think it a reduction, apparently, but I would.

*The Breaking of the Vessels* ends with a close reading of Stevens's heart-breaking poem "The Course of a Partisan", a shorter version of the interpretation given in *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate* but even more affirmative. In its humanist assumptions, Bloom quotes the lines: "The leaves cry. It is not a cry of divine attention. Nor the smoke-drift of puffed-out heroes, nor human cry."

Then he says: "And yet the clear point is that the leaves do cry, and what can that cry be if it is not human? I say: certainly if it is a cry, it is human, but what warrant have we, or had Stevens, for calling it a cry? Leaves don't cry, nightingales don't sing. It is odd that Stevens, having called a cry, makes a point of saying that it is not a human cry. I interpret him as disavowing the facility with which, as in his own poems, 'It is made to become 'Thou'' which is made to become 'I'. He could be distancing himself now, near the end, from the easy rhetoric of 'fantasia', mined here in the very phrase, 'The leaves cry'. Such an interpretation would be a scandal to Bloom, because it would mean, on Stevens's part, the willing 'end of willing, and then the letting go'.

## Perpetually preliminary

D. A. N. Jones

ROY FULLER

*Vamp Till Ready*  
Further Memoirs  
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Is Roy Fuller a Marxist? *Vamp Till Ready*, the second volume of his memoirs, begins with this epigraph: my truth is plighted with gully classes sure to be defeated - Drummond Allison: "For Karl Marx".

The book takes us from Roy Fuller's adolescence as a "lower-middle-class" Communist in Blackpool to his maturity as a thirty-year-old in the 1940s. He remarks that he was touched by the perceptiveness with which John Leinhardt reviewed one of the poems he wrote in a Royal Navy training establishment; but Fuller now wonders, forty years later, whether he was "expressing anything more than a Marxist scepticism".

The scepticism that salts his verse and fiction might well be called Marxist; and there is also a sweeter flavour that we might call Marxian idealism. (Optimism of the will, in Marxist cliché, should accompany pessimism of the intellect.) If the sweetness dloys, or is laid on with a trowel in the wrong place, Fuller is the first to attack himself. He admits here that he once wrote a poem in praise of Stalin's "smiling moustaches" and he refers to this folly half-a-dozen times in a short book, as if wishing to rub salt into his self-inflicted wound.

Readers may remember a verse epistle he wrote to his friends in 1949: We disagree in much, I know: I'm over-fond of Uncle Joe; You find in Auden not an era - Simply a poet who grows queerer: The working class for you's a fact. No statue in the final set.

The last line, I suppose, refers to the vengeful statue in *Don Giovanni*. The idealistic poet was offering to his more sceptical friends a vision of the working class as an angel of justice, preparing to convict "the guilty classes, sure to be defeated".

In *Vamp Till Ready*, Fuller hints at the reasons why Auden could be thought of as an era, as an epoch-making poet. Similarly, he explains why ordinary nine-fifties family men, nothing like Auden, could feel warm towards "Uncle Joe" Stalin. There was a war-time poster, innately emphasizing the us-and-them division in the British class system, which ran: "Your courage, cheerfulness, your resolution will bring us victory". Fuller, as a young seaman, observed, with pleased approval, the graffiti inscribed on this placard: "Uncle Joe will do it on his tod."

Fuller fancies that he may still have some old "proletarian" or at any rate "proletarian" poems in a trunk in the loft and he intends to seek them out, in case there is anything of interest, "even if only in the egg-on-the-smiling-moustaches department". The sceptical pessimist in Fuller rather expects to find something nasty in the loft: his other self, the idealist and optimist, rebukes this tendency. When he was living near a stately home and grand park belonging to a noble family of literary importance, all he wrote about it (he now complains) was this:

Inside the topmost room  
The well-lit spectre  
The complacent ancestor  
The vampire seceded.

In Fuller's novel, *The Father's Comedy* (1961), there is a striking passage about dangerous stuff in the loft. A senior executive, anticipating a knightship, is suddenly called out to a rebellious British colony, to look after his son, a National Service soldier, under arrest for striking a senior officer who had been interrogating prisoners too roughly. The son says to the father: "When did you relegate your copies of Marx from your study shelves to the loft?" For two pages they discuss what is in the loft. "Only rather dog-eared pamphlets," suggests the father.

hopetully. No. "Several volumes of the collected Lenin", asserts the son, with certitude. "This began before I was born", he half-accuses his father. "I've got a built-in disposition to read Marx, to be an intellectual."

The son is engrossed in a high theme: how should a British soldier "enforce law and order" in a colony where the opponents call themselves Marxists? As counterpoint, the father remembers the different lofts in which he stored his old Marxist books and on which he has written dates - "Two days before war started, September first, 1939... rather a melodramatic moment... He could not help feeling the slightly guilty but absorbed and enjoyable self-indulgence of the autobiographer who is normally relient about his past. He was tempted to go on: to a dozen connections presented themselves... trivial but, all of a sudden, enormously interesting details..." This passage from *The Father's Comedy* matches prettily with *Vamp Till Ready*, an autobiography which attempts to catch the spirit of the age in the 1930s and 1940s with a collage of high themes and enormously interesting details - about cigarettes, cricket, hair-cuts and naval rig.

In another verse epistle he wrote to a friend:

Between bright eyes the bulbous nose:  
Between the poetry the prose.  
Enemies and lovers value eyes:  
Nose is for all to recognise.

All the same, his verse is often as public as his prose. There are seven poems printed as an appendix to this memoir. One of them is called "Blackheath: September 1939" and it characterizes the preceding 1930s as "a decade of profound and useless pity". It was a time when every sensible man took it for granted that the elected government and the ruling classes would do everything wrong. "The period", Fuller now writes,

Inculcated a pessimism that lasted far beyond the period itself. I recall being amazed, post-war, at the welcome collapse of the Central African Federation, which I imagined would inevitably impose the injustices of what was then Southern Rhodesia on states more appropriately black-ruled.

He adds, with a different sort of pessimism: "Whether such collapse has in fact added to the sum of African happiness is an elderly buffer's query ex post facto."

"It has pleased Fuller for some years now to present himself, in his writing, as an elderly buffer. (He once cried aloud, during his naval training: 'I'm now old for this course!'). He has something in common with the Old Codgers who compile the "Live Letters" page in the *Daily Mirror*: they encourage Fullerish reminiscences of famous slow bowlers and one-armed snooker players, naval traditions and parkia recipes, thus making their paper more than an ephemeral daily, enriching it with history and social ritual. Two of Fuller's favourite adjectives are "Kafkaesque" and "Proustian": he is at one with the Old Codgers in bringing to a Kafkaesque world a "Proustian" pleasure in the details of ritual and routine, as we grow older, becoming "giants immersed in Time".

His main complaint against Time is expressed in the title, *Vamp Till Ready*, taken from a popular song of his youth: "My life is only a vamp till ready. I've played the long introduction through..." This verse, he says, expresses his "sense at almost every stage of life that the present is a mere preliminary to true happiness or fulfilment". To be an article clerk or a schoolboy, he suggests, is "a purgatorial state"; one is expected to "keep one's eyes on some Nirvana ahead - no doubt a ploy of the bourgeois ethic and the strategy of its disempowerment".

Pensions and mortgages are part of the ploy: when we are very old and feeble we shall own our lovely home and cruise around the world. No doubt his steady work as a solicitor for the Woolwich Equitable Building Society has encouraged Fuller's scepticism about forward-looking prudentialism. When I interviewed him, ten years ago

for a Sunday-paper feature about solicitors, he spoke up forcefully in support of building societies, concluding his advocacy: "What's wrong with that?" In *Vamp Till Ready* he wonders about his pre-war attitude to these money-lending organizations.

How seriously did I take the role of building societies in maintaining the fabric of a society I regarded as doomed? Was there not much that was ludicrous and cowardly in becoming, with my views, even a junior executive in such an organization?... It never struck me with any force in those days that the building society was a characteristic British invention, still with strong elements of mutuality... part of the overwhelmingly well-conducted sector of trade unions and friendly societies...

He then describes an interesting case in which an accomplished working-class woman, Mrs Borders, the wife of a Communist taxi-driver, fought a lawsuit brought against her by a building society and occasioned changes in the law. "In those days," Fuller asks himself,

did I truly want Mrs Borders to win? The answer must be yes: greatly in doubt if asked today. I should still feel a similar *Schadenfreude* at seeing another society in the shit (one with standards less rigorous than the Equitable) but also pang at blows struck against an order established for the people's good.

To this moral questioning about building societies is linked a severe reprimand for George Orwell, who faced the same problem in his novel *Coming Up For Air* - "and solved it, with his usual disregard for probability and fact". George Orwell imitates Roy Fuller, especially when he goes rampaging on "in fascist or at any rate demagogic fashion", about subjects like building societies, of which he is ignorant. Once, when I published a hypercritical essay about Orwell's faults, Fuller reviewed it, remarking that I should have "gone in for the kill". "Thus it is with some timidity that I now suggest that Orwell's *merit* was something in common with Fuller's: a conservatism of conservative or conservatismist values with the left-wing synthesis of idealism and scepticism. To my mind Orwell often mixes the cocktail badly and Fuller mixes it well."

I look forward to the next instalment, which should be about his naval service in Africa, to accompany his poems of 1944, published as *A Last Season*. He put forward, as ever, the disarming simple facts about the continent and the service in such a way as to induce younger men to share his experience. There is a poem by De La Mare about Jonathan Swift:

That sovereign mind;  
Those blue undimmed eyes:  
Never to life, or love, resigned -  
How strange that he who abhorred cant,  
humbung, lies,  
Should be aggrieved by such simplities  
As age, as ordure, and as size.

Surely this must have been influenced by a verse in Fuller's poem about a sailor and a prostitute, "The Growth of Crime".

The images of waking brush  
Like branches he suddenly staring eyes.  
The room is dark, the processions go  
Of distorted passion, haunting lies.  
From window to bed, and make the world  
Fearful as origin and as size.

It is not that Roy Fuller's writing is always aggrieved about the great simplities - upbringing, ageing, fighting, owing - but he often seems to see and feel them as for the first time, so that his poems surprise and his thrillers thrill: a punch in the month sometimes. In the high style: the town of his adolescence offered an environment "just about as unrewarding as could be for one who yearned to write well, and for mankind to live well". More often, he makes his point with slangy understatement: a childhood terror assuring him that he is a member of that part of mankind not enjoying violence or exercising power, for whom war therefore constitutes a particular peril. "Beneath his smiling moustaches is a stiff upper lip."

TIBET

## Out of isolation

Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf

PETER HOPKIRK

*Trepassers on the Roof of the World: The Race for Lhasa*  
274pp. John Murray. £9.75.  
0 7195 3938 2

At a time when Tibet's Chinese masters are arranging for large numbers of affluent foreign tourists to visit the sacred city of Lhasa, it is certainly appropriate to recall the era when Westerners referred to the mountain country ruled by a Buddhist god-king as a "mystery land", beyond the reach of even the most resourceful of travellers. To avoid the fate of the many small countries which have been compelled or tricked into admitting strangers of different ethnic background and unpredictable intentions, the Tibetans had defended their seclusion and unique way of life with a determination unequalled in recent centuries by any nation of comparable size and resources.

It is not generally realized, however, that the Tibetans' passionate insistence on isolation from the outside world was only a reaction to the threatening build-up of imperialist forces on their frontiers, of which they had become aware from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. Earlier trading caravans had linked Tibet with China, India and Nepal for hundreds of years, and since the eighth century Indian priests and scholars had been welcomed in Tibet, and their teaching had laid the foundation of Tibetan religion, which is an amalgam of Mahayana Buddhism and an indigenous faith combining the cult of local deities with the propitiation of demons and spirits. The Tibetans' basic tolerance had made possible prolonged visits by Capuchins and Jesuits, who in the eighteenth century spent some years in Lhasa, where they undertook the first systematic study of Tibetan scriptures and religious beliefs attempted by any Westerner.

*Trepassers on the Roof of the World* refers only fleetingly to these early contacts of Tibet with outsiders. It begins with the nineteenth century, when the rivalry between Britain and Russia led the Tibetans to close their borders to any European irrespective of his status and intentions. In his recent book *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road*, Peter Hopkirk discussed the shabby achievements as well as the adventures and competitive spirit of archaeological explorers working in the heart of Central Asia. Here he concentrates on the exploits and encounters of the many Westerners who for one reason or the other tried unsuccessfully to gain admission to Lhasa, the political and religious centre of the "Forbidden Land". The motives for undertaking such hazardous journeys and for defying the Tibetans' explicit wish to be left alone were as diverse as were the means employed to deceive the Tibetan frontier guards.

The most honourable motives were those of the Indian pundits sent on their clandestine missions by officers of the Survey of India to map parts of Tibet which until then had remained *terra incognita*. These bold and skilled surveyors travelled in the disguise of Buddhist pilgrims visiting sacred places, and their exploits, often unrecorded, and always poorly rewarded, are far more admirable than the more sensational feats of many European gate-crashers. Few of these had any scholarly interests or sympathy for the Tibetans they encountered, and most treated the quest for Lhasa as a kind of sport, not unlike the conquest of Himalayan peaks. With few exceptions they deliberately misled Tibetan officials, indifferent to the fact that by disregarding the latter's pleas to be left alone they exposed them to severe punishments. Indeed numerous Tibetans were sentenced to death because they had succumbed to the blandishments of persuasive Westerners, who traded on the innate curiosity and hospitality of Tibetans reluctant to use force in dealing with

visitors to the country, however undesirable and importunate. Considering the retribution which awaited Tibetans facilitating the entry of foreigners, it is perhaps not surprising that a few travellers apprehended in the course of an illegal journey became victims of harsh treatment, provoked no doubt in some cases by the European's own arrogance and aggressiveness.

Of course, there were exceptions, and among them was the high-minded Annie Taylor, who in 1883 nearly reached Lhasa in disguise, and betrayed by her own guide escaped with her life only because a compassionate Tibetan official sent her back with an escort, fresh horses, a tent, warm clothes and provisions. Though her hope of converting Tibetans to Christianity was unrealistic, she was imbued with idealistic motives and evinced respect for Tibetans. Another missionary, Susie Riphart, whose husband and small child died on a suicidal trek to Lhasa, miraculously survived to write one of the few books of her time which provided an informed account of the Tibetans and their life-style.

While the exploits of the Indian surveyors are fairly well known, Hopkirk's vivid and sensitive descriptions of the character and experiences of other nineteenth-century travellers represent a welcome and eminently readable contribution to the history of Tibetan exploration. The last third of his well-illustrated book deals with the complex relations between British India and Tibet in the early decades of the twentieth century. What individual adventurers had failed to achieve by stealth and ingenuity was ultimately attained by military force. In 1904 an expedition under Colonel Francis Younghusband, supported by large contingents of British and Indian troops, vastly superior in equipment and training to the Tibetan forces manning the frontier defences, fought its way to Lhasa and imposed on the defeated Tibetans a treaty which gave the British the right to establish a trade-agency in Gyantse as well as control over the Tibetans' relations with foreign powers. Though the mission's original aim had been confined to forcing the Dalai Lama's government, then suspected of secret ties with Russia, to enter into serious negotiations, the infliction of heavy casualties on ill-armed Tibetans came in for some criticism, and Younghusband, who had returned to London as a popular hero, also faced government censure regarding the terms of the treaty.

The mission could have been justified, however, if the resultant *de facto* British protectorate over Tibet had been maintained and the Dalai Lama's government supported in its resistance to Chinese pressures. But within two years the British government watered down its policy vis-à-vis Tibet and signed a treaty with China effectively restoring Britain's recognition of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. After 1947, independent India, as heir to the British role on the sub-continent and in Tibet, took the same line. The unfortunate result of this was that when in 1959 Tibet was invaded by Chinese troops, its appeal for help to the United Nations failed to receive adequate support from either Britain or India. Since then the Tibetans' religious system, their priceless libraries and architectural monuments, as well as the traditional way of life have been deliberately destroyed, the worst outrages occurring during China's cultural revolution.

*Trepassers on the Roof of the World* has the great merit of bringing together historical data dispersed over a wide range of political and previously "secret" files deposited in a number of archives, and of re-creating thereby the atmosphere of an era familiar only to a few experts on Asia's colonial history. Although Hopkirk has dealt more with foreigners trespassing on Tibet than with the Tibetans themselves, most readers will agree with the book's concluding sentences: "It is hard not to feel some sympathy for this gentle, cheerful and long suffering people who only ever asked one thing of the outside world. And that was to be left alone."

## BASIL BLACKWELL

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Basil Blackwell Publisher, 108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JF



# Death of the Doppelgänger

S. S. Prawer

MAX FRISCH

*I'm Not Stiller*  
Translated by Michael Bullock  
384pp. Methuen. £8.95.  
0 413 50110 8

Michael Bullock's English version of *I'm Not Stiller* has been before the public since 1958. It accommodated what was then judged to be the shorter attention-span of an Anglo-Saxon public by breaking up many of Frisch's deliberately long paragraphs into shorter units, and also by some discreet abridgement – and it is this last feature which Bullock's new version has set itself to eliminate. English-speaking readers should therefore now be able to come closer to the original than ever before, in a version that remains as readable as one would expect from a translator who has been awarded the accolade of the Schlegel-Tieck Prize. But just how close is that?

Take the name of the protagonist, a man who, after a failed suicide attempt that follows failures in marriage, in art, and in the attempt to lead a new and happier life across the Atlantic, returns to his native Switzerland protesting that he is not Anatol Ludwig Stiller, but an American citizen of German extraction called White. He has a passport to prove it; when a young customs official challenges the authenticity of that document, Stiller-White cuffs his ear, is taken off his train, and finds himself confronted by an inspector who asks him: "Wieso nennen Sie sich White?" The English version reads: "Why do you call yourself Sam White?" This is puzzling indeed; for the only White known to Frisch's German-speaking readers is

called "James Larkin White", and the tombstone of the Doppelgänger he claims to have killed in a characteristically Romantic-Jungian fantasy bears the inscription "Jim White". The whole point of this episode (and much of the novel) is lost if it is Sam and not Jim that "kills" Jim – a Sam who exists, as far as this reviewer can see, only in the translator's imagination.

When his explanations at the customs post prove unsatisfactory, Stiller-White is arrested and taken to a comfortable prison in Zürich, where he is guarded by a warder called Knobel. The very name is a programme; *Knobel* means to work out an intricate puzzle, and Stiller's identity is indeed such a puzzle, not only to outsiders such as his warder, but also to himself (and, of course, to the reader). This Knobel is a simple, romantic soul, who years to be fed tales of crime and adventure in far-away places, a yearning his prisoner is only too ready to satisfy. Before he entered the prison service, Knobel had been a greengrocer with a cart and a horse he had named, characteristically, "little rose". Michael Bullock's translation eliminates this subtle touch by having Knobel call his animal "little horse", *Köseli*, a change which makes far less credible Stiller's initial belief that the creature about whom his warder talks in such affectionate terms is not his horse at all, but the late Mrs Knobel.

Among the takes of murder in exotic places which Stiller-White pours into Knobel's ever-attentive ear, the bloody elimination of one "Direktor Schmitz" occupies a prominent place. This Schmitz, we learn much later, was in fact a client Stiller had fallen foul of in his days as a sculptor in Zürich, and whom he transports in fantasy to an

estate Schmitz owns in Jamaica where – again in fantasy – he can be picturesquely murdered. Knobel recalls vividly what his prisoner had told him of "the way the blood of the director . . . mingled with the brown marsh water and how the black *zopilote* and the well-dressed vulture waited. . .". The well-dressed vulture? A novel and striking image, whose only defect is that it has nothing to do with what Frisch actually wrote. "Das wohlgekleidete Aas" refers, of course, to the "dead" director Schmitz. The primary meaning of *Aas* – "carion" – is satisfyingly overlaid, in the original, by its secondary, abusive meaning: "scoundrel" or "swine".

It will have been noticed that in the passage which creates this sartorially elegant vulture Bullock is content to follow Frisch in leaving the word *zopilote* untranslated. The context indicates clearly enough that it designates some predatory bird; a buzzard perhaps. The same justifiable process is followed in the case of some typically Swiss words such as *Bauernschäbig*. It is all the more surprising, therefore, to find the Hispanic exclamation with which the imprisoned Stiller greets the appearance of his favourite brand of cigar, translated into English, "Dannemann! Meine Leibmarke! Legitimos!" becomes, in this version: "Dannemann! My favourite brand! Really and truly?" But whatever "Legitimos" may be – an appropriately Latin American exclamation of delight or a reminiscence of what is printed on the Dannemann cigar-box – it can't be the question of really and truly? "The Real Thing" would get much nearer; but why not leave it to the original language as Max Frisch's novel does and as Bullock is quite content to do elsewhere?

There are other oddities. In one of the most impressive episodes of the book, in which Stiller (who is afflicted, like so many of his contemporaries, with a Hemingway complex) acts out his own conflicts through the vivid re-enactment of a bull-fight, the bull is described as standing in the centre of the ring "wie ein starrer Heisler". The translators "The bull stands in the centre like a gigantic funnel" gratuitously spoils the image by making it appear as though the funnel-comparison applied to the bull instead of the arena in which he stands at bay. A literal translation – "as in a gigantic funnel" – would have avoided all difficulties. There are many other passages where one would have liked the translator to trust his author a little more. This applies particularly to

Frisch's carefully judged changes of narrative tense: Stiller's confrontation with his senile stepfather, for instance loses much of its force when the German original's startling change from preterite to present tense is ignored and the epic preterite preserved throughout. And what is one to say of Bullock's version of the (thematically essential) passage in which Stiller tries to explain his concept of "reality" to the uncomprehending counsel retained to defend him at a trial that is to determine his "real" identity?

Ich nenne es Wirklichkeit, doch was heisst das! Sie können auch sagen: dass einer mit sich selbst identisch wird! Andernfalls ist er nie gewesen! Sehn Sie, Herr Doktor.

I call it reality, but what does that mean? You could say it depends on a person being identical with himself. That's what I mean, Herr Doktor.

The transmutation of "becoming identical" into "being identical", and the total omission of the sentence "Otherwise he has never been", surely go well beyond the licence we should be prepared to allow even the most gifted translator.

What is most disturbing is that none of these discrepancies (discovered, not by systematic comparison, but by a few random spot checks) is new to the expanded and presumably revised Methuen edition. Every single one of them is to be found in the Abelard-Schuman and Vintage editions which have been open to public scrutiny for well over twenty years. Does no one ever notice such things? Translators less able and less conscientious than Mr Bullock, it would seem, could get away with murder.

In 1982 Max Frisch's novel may not have quite the impact it had when it first appeared in 1954. Its central theme of social role-playing and the stereotype that result has been rammed down our throats by sociologists and sociologically oriented literary critics to such an extent that the very word "role" is likely to produce an exasperated yawn. The *Kind Hearts* and *Coronets* situation of the prisoner sliding down to his cell, pen in hand and virgin notebooks open before him, in order to reconstruct his past life as a series of flashbacks, has become a staple of the German novel; it recurs, for example, in Grass's *Tin Drum* and Lenz's *German Lesson*, two best-sellers that appeared after *Stiller*. The "hypergame" theme – especially the *Sons and Lovers* problem of the man who marries a wife from a higher social category – has been turned over and over in British writings from *Look*

*Back in Anger and Room at the Top* onwards. But Frisch's portrayal of Stiller-White, who reveals himself in his prison "diaries" as a downbeat variation on Hesse's Steppenwolf (whose very name, Heller, the name Stiller recalls and inverts) retains its fascination.

The problems Frisch's protagonist has to face continue to be relevant: that of getting beyond the "false images" we make of others; that of discovering our own authentic self; that of accepting, and living with, the discovered self even if it is irretrievably flawed and inadequate. Even in the 1980s few will fail to respond to Frisch's vivid demonstration of the way in which our most intimate experiences and their expression are pre-formed and deformed not only by the ubiquitous mass media, but also by the great works of art and literature that succeed in gaining attention in our over-stocked imaginary museum. The many parables and tales with which Stiller-White regales various hearers, in which he warns, "makes strange", and illuminates his central concerns, are as fresh as ever. Nor has Stiller's sharp satire on Swiss conditions and points of view, represented in the novel by his stupidly self-satisfied counsel Dr Bohnenblut, lost its edge: especially when the reader realizes, as he must, that what is being so effectively lampooned here has its counterpart outside Switzerland too.

All this is related to the form of Frisch's novel: the games played with the reader in its "diaries" and epilogues, its explicit crossword-puzzle or jigsaw elements, its deliberate echoing of the voices of other writers from Balzac to Thomas Mann, its sometimes parodistic use of structural schemata taken from works ranging from *Werther* to the modern detective novel and spy thriller. It has its faults, of course. Some important characters, especially the female ones, refuse to spring to life, though Stiller's ballet-dancer wife has an insistent physical presence that seems to be based on that of Molra Shearer in the Powell-Pressburger film *The Red Shoes*. Occasionally one finds the author abandoning his characteristic indirectness and speaking too openly with his own voice – the voice we come to know so well from Frisch's published diaries. A few essay-like and religious elements do not seem well integrated into the novel. But however disturbed or dissatisfied some readers may be by details, they cannot but feel the force of what remains one of the most important novels of the post-war years – even when it confronts them in an English dress which needs a little adjustment.

Thomas Sutcliffe

TONIAS WOLFF  
*Hunters in the Snow*  
175pp. Cape. £6.95.  
0 224 01986 4

Short stories are sometimes referred to as if they were an endangered species, urgently in need of acts of conservation by self-appointed publishers and fiction editors who can commission collections and anthologies. Reading *Hunters in the Snow* it is hard not to feel that in some cases benign neglect might be a more effective policy, leaving the genre to work out its own survival in the environment of glossy monthlies and literary reviews. It isn't that Tobias Wolff's collection contains a single story that shouldn't have been published at some time, somewhere. His melancholy and regretful accounts of the hazards of sociable solitude and the pitfalls of the urbane jungle might have contrasted well with the sophisticated enthusiasms of *TriQuarterly* or *Vogue*. A story about social culpability in an American prep school probably sounded an effective dissonance when printed in *Atlantic Monthly*; just as an account of the humiliations of the academic life would have an extra edge for the readership of *Amicus*. But when they are removed from their natural habitat, the effect of the stories is increasingly dispiriting; reading them is like touring a cage in which the same restless, morose animal.

None of Wolff's characters is really happy, and by and large they seem to be unhappy for similar reasons: loneliness, a vagueness about the best way to behave, and continuing distress at the inefficiency of mere politeness as a means of doing good. They resign

themselves to their inertia, to grey fates dictated by other people's expectations and the consequences of decisions already taken. The prevailing conditions are gloomy and overcast, with intermittent rain and occasional mist.

Adam Mars-Jones

JOHN CHEEVER  
*Oh What a Paradise It Seems*  
100pp. Cape. £5.50.  
0 224 02930 4

John Cheever's final novel has a lame title, a fluffed coda, and an ugly sentence half-way through. The sentence refers to a psychiatrist's attempts to override his sexual nature, and reads: "Indeed, he had crushed these random swellings as if they breached that paradigm that furnished his equilibrium." Here for once Cheever's words seem to have been thrown together by the literary equivalent of computer dating; they have none of their usual air of aroused familiarity.

Before and after that sentence, everything flows almost absently well. The plot concerns a pond in New England, its pollution and eventual purification, but it isn't the sort of plot that draws attention to itself; it focuses the activities of the characters only casually.

Few writers can have been so lucky with a book of farewell; but then validation, early and frequent, was something of a speciality of Cheever's. His descriptions celebrate their subjects without fetishizing them, or dwelling on them for too long; and "goodbye" is the first as well as the last word in the volume of his Collected Stories.

By and large Cheever's characters, too, forgive the world for changing around them without asking permission. Certainly they resent the crowded highways when they drive to the beach, but they remind themselves that without cars they couldn't get to the beach in the first place. Cheever's heroes have an inbuilt sense of proportion which is a vast improvement on reality; no one in life would be quite so fair-minded except to show someone else up. But in the context of a literature largely given over to inflated emotions, these small sallies become moving and hilarious.

Horace Chisholm, the environmentalist, was driving south-east on

## Things falling apart

Thomas Sutcliffe

TONIAS WOLFF  
*Hunters in the Snow*  
175pp. Cape. £6.95.  
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Short stories are sometimes referred to as if they were an endangered species, urgently in need of acts of conservation by self-appointed publishers and fiction editors who can commission collections and anthologies. Reading *Hunters in the Snow* it is hard not to feel that in some cases benign neglect might be a more effective policy, leaving the genre to work out its own survival in the environment of glossy monthlies and literary reviews. It isn't that Tobias Wolff's collection contains a single story that shouldn't have been published at some time, somewhere. His melancholy and regretful accounts of the hazards of sociable solitude and the pitfalls of the urbane jungle might have contrasted well with the sophisticated enthusiasms of *TriQuarterly* or *Vogue*. A story about social culpability in an American prep school probably sounded an effective dissonance when printed in *Atlantic Monthly*; just as an account of the humiliations of the academic life would have an extra edge for the readership of *Amicus*. But when they are removed from their natural habitat, the effect of the stories is increasingly dispiriting; reading them is like touring a cage in which the same restless, morose animal.

A novella by Martin Walser, *Beyond All Love*, translated by Judith L. Black, is included in *New Writing and Writers 19* (102pp. John Calder. £6.95; paperback, £3.50. 0 7145 3811 6). The volume also includes a story, "Antique Air", by Harry Mulisch, translated by Adrienne Dixon; "Two Themes", "Time on a Dark River" and "A Short Introduction to Eskimo Studies" – by the Scots writer Kenneth White; and "The Servant", by the Argentinean, Copi, translated by John Calder. "Won't you Come Home, Mister Marvell", a "dramatic text" by Patrick Morrissey; and a group of "Fables" by Edward Bond. Previous volumes of *New Writing and Writers* have published work by Alan Burns, Alexander Troch, Penelope Shuttle, Samuel Beckett, Elspeth Shurtle, Tony Duvert, Robert Pinget, William Burroughs and Heinrich Böll; in their introduction, the publishers comment: "In *NEW WRITING* we sound a warning for the future of serious, committed, offbeat writing. This warning holds true."

There is thus a sadness at the heart of

route 336 late one afternoon. The ecology was in a bad way, and Horace felt for it; his thoughts were gloom. It occurred to him that at least it would be real and true to eat some blackberries. Blackberries were growing by the verge, and next to them was a bright blue baby-carrier. It was full, of a baby, which Horace took to a police station. On the way, we are told, he felt "distinguished. He felt his to be one of the few cars on the road that was transporting a pleasant baby."

The police were kind, though a trifle possessive; they would rather Horace had left before the baby's father arrived. The father, when he arrived, invited Horace to dinner the next night, with a promise of noodles: "My wife makes wonderful fettuccini. That's green noodles. She makes them with spinach." Horace is content, remembering a pleasant baby, anticipating noodles; and he isn't patronized for the modesty of his pleasures. Cheever has a love for limitation.

Contempt for other people's lives is in fact one of the few emotions in the book to earn a rebuke. A psychiatrist who doesn't listen to his patients gets short shrift, and so does a young man, nephew of one of the majority stockholders, who selects the Brandenburg concertos for the muzak-track of the Buy Brite supermarket. He relishes the irony. The narrator intervenes to tell us that this character is, "spiritually speaking", "frail", and that there is no irony, since Brandenburg was a market town. Grocers and merchants have always heard the concertos too.

Cheever's own irony is so scrupulously withheld as to be almost undetectable. It becomes part of the climate, and needn't be discharged in thunderbolts. Not that Cheever plays it safe; there are dazzling throwaways in this book, and passages of great rhetorical daring. Elderly Lemuel Sears is rejected by his girlfriend and left standing outside the door to her flat. The next two pages convey his state of mind by means of a lengthy description of an unprepossessing village in the Balkans (where the government newspaper distorts all facts "including the weather and the rainfall"). The combination of

themselves to their inertia, to grey fates dictated by other people's expectations and the consequences of decisions already taken. The prevailing conditions are gloomy and overcast, with intermittent rain and occasional mist.

In "An Episode in the Life of Professor Brooke" an inoffensive and honourable academic exposes himself to the conspiratorial solidarity of a disliked colleague after an innocent adventure at a literary seminar away from home. All his difficulties come about as a result of his wife nothing to hurt feelings. He tells his wife nothing, suffering his own deceit in order to spare her, but she smells perfume on his shirt; an unhappiness is compounded out of inexplicable circumstances and her justified faith in her husband's fidelity. In the only other story with an academic setting a lacklustre and waterlogged historian (she has been teaching in Oregon, beset by one of the constant drizzles which fall through this book) abandons a lifetime of discreet intellectual timidity to stage a quiet and hopeless rebellion in the lecture hall. In "Maiden Voyage" an elderly man, solemnly celebrating the golden anniversary of a routine marriage on a cruise, resists the relentless conviviality of the social director – a man who uses sentiment like Chemical Warfare to bring his charges into line. For Tweed love is "the arbiter of heaven. If two individuals can stock up a century of love between them, well as far as I personally am concerned the smartalecks will just have to go on home and think of something else to try and make us give up on." Called upon to explain the secret of his marriage, the old man himself offers a marriageable reply: "Nothing to it. You just go from day to day and before you know it fifty years are up."

This philosophy of stolid impermeability is offered as one of the

leisurely analysis and comic invention interrupting a scene should by rights be unstable (Henry James Thurbur is not a plausible hybrid), but it works, and the scene outside the flat, when it resumes, has its own surprise to spring. The lift arrives, but it contains the lift attendant and not the glamorous Renee, as Lemuel has hoped. Nevertheless the lift attendant consoles him sexually.

Another daring episode unseats Lemuel from his position as the book's hero and focus of values. It is Lemuel who determines to save Beasley's Pond from pollution, but when this mission is accomplished he becomes one of the Great Boreds of Today. His technical account of the purification process goes on and on, threatening at any moment (like all authentic ledium) to become interesting, but always relapsing. Cheever is too wily to let a character stagnate, or resist stagnation indefinitely.

Unfortunately it is Lemuel rather than Cheever who seems to be responsible for the penultimate paragraph of the book, its one inflated epiphany. These stuffy sentences ("that most powerful sense of our being alive on the planet," etc) could come from an obituary, written by no friend of the deceased, and they detract significantly from the almost continuous pleasure of the book.

At its best, Cheever's fiction offers a peculiar and salutary balance of forces; the immediacy of his prose goes hand in hand with a teasing awareness of artifice, of a human limitation not confined to the characters. If he resembles anyone, Cheever resembles that unthinkable person, a dabbleable Nabokov; and if that comparison is allowed, I will go on, reckless now, to liken *Oh What a Paradise It Seems*, in its valdetrico concision and radiance, to *Transparent Things*.

But in range of sympathy Cheever is incomparable; Nabokov, for all his decorous mischief, would have found it hard to describe a monoglot (say) with a dislike of butterflies writing a good poem. Cheever is urbane without being evasive; his nostalgia is unresentful, and his ventures into new territory are free of strain or self-congratulation.

better resources for dealing with the world, and moments when the cloud lifts are seen either as bogus or simply illusory. The rain might get warmer for a while (it is actually described as doing this in one story) but it isn't going to stop. Wolff's characters would exact our pity if there wasn't such a strong suggestion that pity could go off in our faces, that it is a condescending and unperceptive emotion which fails to take account of our own pitifulness. In the end it is hard not to feel a sense of downhearted acquiescence in the baleful spirit of the stories.

Perhaps this is just repeating the naive complaint of "the widowed mother" in "The Liar", one of the best stories in the book. She is worried by her youngest son's compulsion to tell stories of appalling domestic tragedy to any stranger prepared to listen. It isn't just the lies that worry her, but their morbidity; for her the invention of misery is a poor addition to the world and a disturbance to be cured. (Told that the boy will outgrow this phase she asks "What if he doesn't? What if he just gets better at it?" (One answer would be that he will stop giving them to strangers for free, and with a bit of encouragement might, like Wolff, win an O. Henry prize and a grant from the National Endowment of Arts). In fact the young boy concedes that her imagination is superior – "She could imagine things as coming together, not falling apart" – although that doesn't prevent him from having her killed off by Communists in conversation on the bus next day. It seems to be a compulsion Wolff can't shake off either.

Richard Brautigan's collection of short stories and sketches, *The Tokyo-Montana Express*, which was first published in 1961, has recently been reissued in paperback format (191pp. Pan Books. £2.50. 0 330 26786 8).

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## Robin Robbins



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# The moping and the melancholy

Robin Robbins

## MICHAEL MACDONALD

*Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England*

323pp, Cambridge University Press, £27.50, 0 521 23170 7

"Troubled with whirlwinds", tempted by spirits to "tunnances" and blasphemy, blaming a witch at Dodford, Thomas Langly rode or trudged some thirty-five miles in 1627 to seek relief from the rector of Great Linford in Bedfordshire. Langly was one of thousands of mentally disturbed people who made their way from all over England, from Yorkshire and Sussex, Somerset and Norfolk, though chiefly from villages and small towns within twenty miles or so, to consult a famous astrological physician, the Rev Richard Napier. His case notes covering the years 1597 to 1634, though incomplete, are the only volume of the Ashmole collection in the Bodleian Library; on them Michael MacDonald has based a richly informative study of the causes, manifestations, concepts, and treatment of mental disorder in seventeenth-century rural England.

Born in 1559, Napier was inducted to the living of Great Linford (between Stour Stratford and Newport Pagnell) in 1590, and must have begun to practise medicine soon afterwards, though not formally licensed to do so until 1604. According to the horoscope he cast for himself, he was "Extreme fearful by nature to declaim or preach... and much afflicted with moping melancholy", so it must have been by preference that he spent a large proportion of his time on the estimated 80,000 clients who had sought his advice by the time he died in 1634. Somewhat under 5 per cent presented symptoms of mental disorder: typical examples given by MacDonald from one day's consultations in 1620 are a man "very moping and lightheaded" because his brain was "crazed with studying"; a married couple "troubled in mind" - she because he was unkind, he for no apparent reason; and "a love-struck twenty-two-year-old who was 'lunatic by fits'".

Clergymen though he was, Napier seldom resorted to prayer or exorcism: instead, mental suffering usually received much the same treatment as physical - bleeding and purging. But, under the notorious Simon Forman, Napier studied astrology, inherited the manuscripts in 1611 (and, incidentally, passing on instruction in astrology and alchemy to that epitome of credulity, Sir Kenelm Digby), and so for each patient he carefully cast a horoscope, hoping thus to establish the predisposing cause of ailments, and to receive hints for a prognosis. The benefit to the historian of this superstitious practice is, MacDonald points out, twofold: firstly, it induced a habit of meticulously recording, as well as symptoms, the details of time, identity and age, required to cast a horoscope; secondly, the astrologer, instead of travelling to his patient like the classical physician, received visits at his house, often at half-hourly intervals, in the style of the modern general practitioner, thus treating a greater number of people. MacDonald is consequently able to draw on a sample of 767 more or less fully noted cases of mental disorder, occurring among the top two-thirds of rural society, from gentry and gentlewomen waiting to shopkeepers, farmworkers and servants, not excluding, however, representatives of a wider world and more extended social scale, from a dozen or more noblemen down to beggars and university dons.

MacDonald has collected and analysed Napier's brief case notes not just to provide an account of mental illness and its treatment, but to illustrate from the anxieties and conflicts reported that everyday life of country folk, the emotional and social experience of those whose thoughts (unlike the Archers') are normally obscured by the darkness of illiteracy. (This last is an especially telling obstacle in one area of investigation as MacDonald reminds us, "Few Tudor and Stuart suicides could have left

notes, for most of the people who killed themselves were poor and probably illiterate." There's one purpose of education for you.)

That *Mystical Bedlam* offers more to the social than to the medical historian is not surprising while psychologists and psychiatrists continue to argue among themselves over the nomenclature and classification of mental illnesses - or even their real existence. In this last respect, Napier's case notes solidly refute claims that the concept of mental illness is a modern invention, or even that modern man suffers as never before from stress and anxiety. Fear, jealousy, hatred, and violence flourished in the almost inescapably close rural communities; love and marriage, bereavement and poverty, produced stress just as they do today. As regards terminology, MacDonald sensibly restricts himself to reproducing and using that employed by laymen then and now, not replacing "melancholy", for example, with "depression". His list of forty-eight symptoms selected for special scrutiny, ranging in order of frequency from Troubled in Mind (nearly a third of disturbed patients), down through such as Mopishness, Fearful, Simply Sad, Fancies and Concelts, Took Fright, Suicidal, Frantic, Grieving, Cannot follow business, Evil Thoughts, Laughs, Too much talk, Screams or Cries, Terrible Dreams, Lunatic, Curses, to the least frequent Solitary, Suspicious, Wandering, is hardly susceptible, consequently, to detailed correlation with surveys of modern populations by any particular school of psychiatric theory.

The conclusions to be drawn from MacDonald's tables are therefore qualitative rather than quantitative, and social rather than clinical. Indeed, social considerations affected Napier's otherwise relatively consistent terminology: as MacDonald puts it: "he was aware of the social properties that governed the naming of woes... his growing esteem in court circles providing a swelling tide of gloomy gentry whom he could appropriately call melancholy". While 65 per cent of his aristocratic patients complained of this fashionable malady, only 6 per cent of them were given the undignified designation "mopish". The "troubled in mind" and "mopish" who constituted the major proportion of his patients "were a socially undistinguished lot".

Though writers from about 1580 onwards inclined to the view that there was practically an epidemic of "melancholy" and other mental disorders in England, their assertions are rather attributable to new concepts and classifications than supported by hard evidence. MacDonald sensibly cautions his readers against drawing detailed inferences or wider implications from his statistical tables: to start with, Napier's records are incomplete in so patchy a way that no safe generalizations can be made about yearly variations, no correlations made with fluctuations in general prosperity. MacDonald is thus wise to eschew climatic pirouettes in a disclaimer both accurate and modest: "Although it displays some of the fashionable trappings of quantitative history, this study is made largely of old-fashioned historical fustian, woven together from a study of the language of Napier's case

notes and the scientific, literary and theological works of his contemporaries. "One suspects that he is not, in any case, entirely happy carrying out statistical exercises on page 103. He makes the puzzling statement that 'almost one third of the episodes of illness, despair, or madness among Napier's patients were triggered by the death of a spouse. Of these 42 tormented survivors, 33 were women.' Since the totals for Madness and Despair alone in Appendix E amount to 188, and 'illness' might include all estimated 60,000 patients, at the very least the 767 whose precipitating stresses were specified, one is driven to conjecture that he means that of the total 134 bereavements among those 767 (Table 3.3 on p 78) is likewise perplexingly headed) almost one third succumbed to madness, despair, or some other mental illness.

Seven tenths of those 767 stressed patients reported one of four common categories of stress: bereavement afflicted a fifth of them, marital problems about the same proportion; about an eighth were beset by economic problems, about twice that proportion by the troubles of courtship. A much smaller category of patient may ring the bell of recognition with some readers today: "The strain of prolonged study... was frequently blamed [ie, in 27 cases] for the insanity [or unhappiness] of clergymen, university dons, and intellectually ambitious laymen." Of more general importance in present debates is MacDonald's conclusion that the complaints of anxieties and difficulties in courtship and married life by over (not "Almost") two fifths of Napier's stressed patients "makes nonsense of historians' confident assertions that romantic love was rare in seventeenth-century England, or that it was unimportant in choosing marital partners". The greater availability of records concerning the properties and the titled (coupled sometimes, perhaps, with a mutual snobbery that sees the latter as somehow representative of the past) has encouraged some to focus on families "whose marriages were negotiated like corporate mergers" but "sentiment undoubtedly flourished best where status and property were least important". Napier's notes show not only that peasants and artisans were capable of passionate love then as now, but also that people expected marriage to be a love-relationship, and that the frustration or loss of love were accepted as "sufficient cause for misery or madness". Then as now, young adults agonized over love and marriage, "the uncertainties of getting a living and bearing children".

The disabling grief felt when spouses died likewise testifies to the closeness and warmth of many marriages. Love and suffering are acutely exemplified in the man who was so frightened by his wife's terrible pain in childbirth that he went mad. Though the question of who was to marry whom "was the greatest single source of conflict between generations among Napier's patients", young people seem usually to have won: the evidence suggests that forced marriages were rare in the population, as a whole, and love-matches common. (One may, however, object that MacDonald's two instances of men allegedly dying for love, quite contrary

to Rosalind's opinion, are both derived from hearsay.)

Marriage depending on "spiritual harmony" rather than property and status was encouraged by Puritan moralists, but the equality of women we might now assume this to imply was not fostered by the all-male church committed to maintaining Judeo-Christian norms, or by Tudor and Stuart husbands (applied terms by MacDonald "cottage despots"), or "by customs that kept them economically dependent and socially deferential". Almost twice as many women as men presented symptoms of psychological distress to Napier, leading MacDonald cautiously to opine that "marriage had the same dolorous effects on the mental health of women in the seventeenth century as it has today." Apart from the ordeals of childbearing ("the fear, stress, and illnesses induced by difficult births contributed to the mental disorders of 81 of Napier's patients"), there were those "cottage despots", the husbands. While Napier agreed with the Marriage Homily that wife-beaters were irrational, he nevertheless considered that wives' urges to escape from their marriages were *ipso facto* signs of mental imbalance.

One way in which early seventeenth-century views of insanity both coincided in principle with and departed in particulars from those of today's authorities thus lay in definitions. Direct flouting of a generally accepted system of values was by most people then as now regarded as irrational, not only destructive of the social fabric, but contrary to the perpetrator's own interests. The rebellious wife, the child - even if adult - who defied his elders, anyone who attacked his own family, or broke costly and prestigious windows, or destroyed his own clothes - items both expensive and embodying social identity - seemed out of her or his mind. To note this is not to deny that such people may suffer mental distress. Indeed, conflict with accepted values and practices is all too likely to produce it - but to remind ourselves that cause and effect were and are easily confused, that distress and deviant behaviour might be attributed simply to the desire not to conform, to disregard the established social and familial order - a mysterious, perverse, self-generating malady.

Another potent force (though MacDonald is wary of conclusions here) in the definition, generation, and alleviation of mental suffering was religion. Conviction of sin and terror of damnation were fostered by Calvinist proselytizers who could then come up pat with an offer of "redemption" on their terms as remedy. One may suspect that without a rigid religious conditioning there would have been no case for treatment in respect of Edward Cleaver who, in 1623, "was sorely tempted with profane and ungodly thoughts, and sometimes with an inward smiling and laughing in his heart", and that it would not have mattered to him or anyone else that "One day after thanking the Lord for his supper, 'an ill motion came into his mind, saying 'Kiss my arse'".

MacDonald emphasizes that in England at this time "Lunatics were not treated with superstitious reverence... goody sages, ever ready to utter a profundity". Ironically, the very Puritan enthusiasts who offered psychological relief were themselves designated as sick by orthodox Anglicans, as sufferers from "religious melancholy". Napier himself used religion to console rather than condemn with comforting counsel for those afflicted with guilty fear, exorcism and amulets for those believed by themselves or others to be possessed by evil spirits.

Out of 513 who suspected bewitchment, over half were mentally disturbed. More pragmatic were the Earl and Countess of Sussex who, finding the "rest of their adulterous union evaporated" when it was rumored, alleged, and proved, that accusations gave hope of conquering otherwise mysterious maladies, and also of paying off personal scores. As a believer in unseen powers, Napier

neither dismissed nor concurred with all such suspicions.

In any case, whether the malady were physical or mental, whether its cause was thought to be natural or supernatural, Napier's treatment tended to be the same, varying only with the size of the patient's purse. His procedures were eclectic: to the normal practice of the time, whereby the mentally ill were cared for by their families, rather than - as increasingly after the Restoration - imprisoned, shackled, and beaten in the ironically named "asylums" that proliferated across the nation in the eighteenth century, he added the standard inflictions of classical medicine: "Regardless of their symptoms, almost every one of Napier's mentally disturbed patients were purged with emetics and laxatives and bled... Tobacco... was especially popular as a vomit". Opiales were prescribed (as was also orthodox) for up to a fifth of those termed mad, lunatic, distracted, or light-headed. Even those whose grief or anxiety was expressed in religious terms were even-handedly dosed like the physically sick with emetics and laxatives. Though MacDonald attributes popular faith in the doctors of that day to the "placebo effect", patients who returned may have done so out of desperation, and those who did not may have stayed away through deterrence as much as through feeling cured. When one of Napier's patients, the lunatic adulterer Viscount Purbeck, "Took a gentle purge... it wrought twenty times, and he said he would never take any more." In his case, it was presumably only the powerful influence of his brother, the Duke of Buckingham, that kept him in Napier's hands.

So meticulously supported and moderately promoted are MacDonald's arguments that it would be hard to qualify them to any great degree. Sometimes, however, small errors suggest a less than complete familiarity with his fields of study: a medical authority named "Aretaeus" and a county of "Huntingshire" appear in both text and index; Ivinghoe, Cogenhoe, and Higham Ferrers are "towns" on p 56, but, more properly, "villages" on pp 68-9, while Luton is a "town" on the former page, a "village" on p 61. A more substantial slip, regretfully, is aroused by the transcription on p 290 (Ashmole 198: "Thomson of Watton... elixir unto which 'changeable' should read 'Tomson of Watton... Elidre Vitae which he said... changeable'. The last emendation is offered as a probable rather than an absolute certainty: Napier's notebooks, scrawled in the heat of consultation in a very variable secretary hand for his own eyes only, are indeed difficult to read, and since most of MacDonald's argument depends not on sustained quotation but on the extraction of single words such as symptoms and place-names, it may be hoped that it is not seriously undermined by this shortcoming, unpardonable though it would be in a textual editor.

The achievements of this book are manifold: it provides insights into not only the mental sufferings of ordinary seventeenth-century people and the therapeutic eclecticism of a man who, treated them, but also their personal values and expectations, family and social relations, and the influence of religious beliefs on mental health. At the same time it shows that "medical science" triumphed over "exorcism, amulets, and prayer not because it was any more effective at that time but because its attitudes better suited the establishment in its drive against individual pretensions to spiritual power. It reminds us that mental illness is not a twentieth-century phenomenon, or even invention. And, almost incidentally, it rescues from the iniquity of oblivion a man celebrated in his day, one who was a cousin of the inventor of logarithms and dined with John Dee, one who thought the unicorn existed, and who converted, with Raphael, and who managed to be both a hermetic, cabalistic astrologer and an orthodox, learned Anglican minister - as MacDonald terms him, an "obscure and rustic Faustus".

# High priest of 'Hi-de-Hi'

Paul Smith

## BILLY BUTLIN AND PETER DACRE

*The Billy Butlin Story: "A Showman to the End"*

287pp, Robson, £7.50, 0 86051 168 5

Is this a tract for our times? Small man with little formal education begins with hoop-la stunts, rises by his own exertions to make millions by making millions happy, and dies rich, famous, and, (fairly) contented. The script might have been written by Saatchi and Saatchi around an idea created by Mr Cecil Parkinson. A pity that this exemplary demonstration of the virtues of enterprise came a little too early to receive its true reward. Instead of the Norman Tebbit Cross with bicycle clips, Billy Butlin had to be content with a knighthood, the sort of thing given to civil servants, long-stay aldermen, even professors.

Sandwiched between a foreword from the Duke of Edinburgh ("The rich have always been the targets of envious abuse") and a testimonial from a past president of Variety International ("one of the most humane beings I have ever met") this might have been merely the bland autobiography of success. It is saved by Sir Billy's willingness to admit an occasional mistake and by contributions from his widow and sons which make it clear that driving individualism has its penalties, often paid by others. Butlin could neither keep still nor stop working, often made his staff emulate his own seven-day week, apparently drove two wives to drink by neglect, found little time for his business over to his son, against whom he was soon conspired with a group whose take-over bid he had fiercely resisted only a few years earlier. Could this be the same friendly, humorous, rather shy man, who became one of the outstanding philanthropists of our time (more than two million pounds given to charity), was fond of elephants, and - a tell-tale sign of grace - was embarrassed by the attentions of Kamon Andrews? Were some of his huge benefactions, as his son suggests, guilt money?

If Billy Butlin had time for an inner life, small sign of it appears here. This is a reticent book, despite the surface showmanliness. The experience of the First World War, which Butlin entered as a fifteen-year-old volunteer in the Canadian army, profoundly affected him and armoured him against future trials (nothing could ever be as bad as the trenches), but his years as a stretcher-bearer in France are dismissed in a page and a half. Reflection seldom breaks in. The few rhapsodies for the conduct of life and business have all the vivacity of notices from a Rotary Christmas cracker. Work hard at something you enjoy. Be your own boss. Look after the small things. "Women and business do not mix" (he felt his first two wives needed his success). What he loved was activity, and what carried him forward was a shrewd eye for people's behaviour and tastes.

The freshest and most entertaining parts of the book are those which describe his early days serving his apprenticeship as a showman in travelling the West Country fairs, observing the psychology of holiday crowds, learning to attract the public with stalls painted bright red and white, manned by smartly uniformed attendants and enlivened with the slogan "Hurrah! It's Butlin's", and struggles with the families of "tiding waters" who let them "ground". As the growth of the charabanc excursion to the coast in the late 1920s thinned the background crowds, he moved into seaside amusement parks, and made his first big killing by securing the sole European agency for the new for the Olympia fair, it was estimated that he had a million pounds were invested in the enterprise, earning him an annual profit of £20,000-£25,000.

The holiday camp, which made his name, was not his invention, though it did flourish when the first one came into being. Butlin himself believed that it

was at Caister in 1902. *The Times*, in 1938, thought there were already about 150 holiday camps in Britain. "A few thirty years old or more". But the Butlin's camp opened at Skegness in 1936 was new in the degree of its comforts and amenities, even if the arrival of the first campers on Easter Saturday was greeted by snow. The LNER saw enough profit in transporting Butlin's campers to the East Coast to pay for half his advertising; and the 1938 holidays-with-pay legislation, for which he lobbied MPs, supplied a further stimulus.

Those who see individualistic enterprise as the chief or only motor of progress tend to buttress its economic virtues by alleging social merits as well, not least the fostering of freedom through rejection of conformity, dependence, and centralized control. Yet much of it has been conspicuously thrived in the modern era on the negation of individual taste, on getting more people to want, or at any rate to buy, larger quantities of the same things. Butlin's holiday camps represented the simple, shrewd commercialization of the relatively new phenomenon of mass leisure. One might argue that they exploited a need of generations regimented by the communal disciplines of education, work, and war to take even their holidays within a fixed institutional framework. In *Beside the Seaside*, James Walvin notes contemporary opinion that all-inclusive holidays, especially in camps with "firm routines", were particularly suited to the needs of working people. It is tempting to see Butlin's camps as a sort of democratic substitute for *Kraft durch Freude* or Mussolini's *dopolavoro*, or even to incorporate them into a portmanteau analysis of the decline of individual initiative and self-reliance, the substitution of collective for personal pleasures and of "entertainment" for knowing how to entertain oneself.

But any picture of Billy Butlin as MC to the picnic masses, trading group bonhomie for the hard-earned fruits of Accrington's or Burnley's labour, needs careful scrutiny. Butlin ascribes his ability to give millions what they wanted to his being "an ordinary man with ordinary tastes". He was not, however, as much a son of the people as it might seem. His father, if he married a travelling showman's daughter and decamped to South Africa, probably as a remittance man, came of a family of country bankers and clergymen, and was known in Cape Town, where he was a noted tennis player, as "The Baron". And who were the happy campers? This is not a social history and we learn very little about the people who made Butlin's fortune, but a significant phrase in the book is his reference to his early ambition to open a holiday camp "for the great mass of middle-income families". "Middle-income" is ambiguous; nor can we interpret very easily in class terms the fact that Butlin's called dinner "evening meal", because dinner for most campers was what they had at midday. Walvin, however, points out that their capital cost made it hard for holiday camps to be really cheap and suggests that "smaller-salaried" people formed the bulk of the inmates. A survey calculated that only five per cent of Butlin's visitors in 1947 were working class. The 1938 holidays-with-pay act was only an enabling measure, and does not seem to have created a working-class holiday boom; probably the general recovery from the slump was more important in providing Butlin's early customers.

Butlin was not a very direct competitor with Blackpool or Brighton. Those who wanted a traditional holiday with promenades, pubs, walk stalls, risqué postcards, and trips round the harbour, went on taking it. Butlin's stemmed from its founder's experience of a boarding-house holiday in a wet South Wales, when, turned out between meals, he had watched families miserably looking for amusement in the rain. It offered an escape from the seaside landlady, covered facilities on a wet day, somewhere to park the children, and a relentless parade of entertainment on the spot. You drank

in the Tyrolean beer garden, waltzed to Mantovani in the Viennese dance hall, laughed at Elsie and Doris Waters or lessons in boxing from Len Harvey or in tennis from Dan Maskell, shouted "Hi-de-Hi" and "Ho-de-Ho", and were jollied along by the indefatigable redcoats, half of them, apparently, frustrated singers and comedians, looking for a way into show business. You were not just given a holiday, but recruited to a cause and invited to form a habit. Children became Butlin Beavers, with a Beaver Code and Beaver Lodges, while adults had Albert Hall reunions, national talent contests, and the Butlin's national Sister even reminded you of your experience in a song.

Was it Skegness or Clacton or Fife. Was it April, June or July? Remember we met at Butlin's I was the guy

The accent was on clean, family fun, the prevailing tone conventional and paternalistic. After the war, camps acquired their own chapels and resident padres. Perhaps this explains the otherwise mysterious "services to the Church" for which Sir Billy says he was knighted. The Church Commissioners had a large holding in Butlin's, which was thought in 1969 to be one of the obstacles to the determined take-over bid by Phonographic Equipment, who saw fast pickings in the installation of their gambling machines in the camps, something Billy Butlin stoutly opposed as likely to drive away traditional Butlin's clients (though he tolerated bingo and had done well as a young soldier running a crown and anchor game). The more strident aspects of the camps were toned down in the post-war years, and the Bristol Old Vic and the San Carlo opera company signalled a further movement "up market". The feeling is more of a bank clerk's beano than of a weaver's wakes week.

In the end, Butlin controlled the business tightly and too long. Inability to delegate was fatal as the firm expanded and soon slowed to a halt. A Bahamas venture lost a lot of money, and at home bookings and profits were falling sharply by the mid-1960s, as package holidays abroad and the rise of self-catering demanded new responses. Once Butlin's entrepreneurial flair waned, he found that some of those who had done well out of it had little time for an "ordinary" man: he was not even asked to sit down when summoned by representatives of big institutional shareholders to be told that they intended to replace him as managing director. He survived the challenge, calling the small shareholders to his aid and creating some faggy votes for the occasion, just as at the time of Suez he survived a carpeting by the Foreign Office for banning Egyptians from the Butlin's Cross-Channel Swim, one of his many publicity stunts. A government prepared to back the self-made man against faceless finance and contemptuous of the Foreign Office would perhaps have pleased him.

His story is engagingly told, and entertainingly told, and Robson Books have done their proof-reading more conscientiously than some grander publishers, though anyone looking for the "Hotel Lottie" in Paris is likely to end up in the wrong part of Montmartre. Those who did not have to live with Billy Butlin when his incoercible drive was at its height clearly found much to love in him; and they buried him, as was only right, in the showman's brown bowtie.

*Great Britain: A Celebration* by Hunter Davis and Frank Herrmann (288pp, Hamish, £12.50, 0 241 10755 5) contains nineteen "acts of celebration" of peculiarly British institutions, which are seen by the authors as an antidote to the economic gloom of the "dark present". The book contains personal accounts with historical background and photographs of Sissinghurst; Sotheby's Sale Room; Wembley Football Stadium; Kersey, Suffolk; Marks and Spencer; Durham Cathedral; The Royal Mile, Edinburgh; the Queen Mother's Scottish Castles; the Rainhill Railway Trials; Blackpool; Eton College; Neil Kinnock MP; the Giant's Causeway, Ulster.

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## A Trifle

I had been moping to work through lunch  
The day before yesterday  
Our office-block is the tallest in Belfast  
When the Tainyoy sounds  
Another bomb-alert,  
We take four or five minutes to run down  
The thirty-odd flights of steps  
To street level.

I had been trying to get past  
A woman who hold, at arm's length, a tray  
And on the tray the remains of her desert -  
A plate of blue-pink trifle  
Or jelly-ponge,  
With a dollop of whipped cream on top.



# Moving away from Ruskin

J. Mordaunt Crook

## BENEDICT READ

Victorian Sculpture  
414pp. Yale University Press. £30.  
0 300 02506 8

When the late Rupert Gunnis's *Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660-1851* appeared (undated) in 1953, it was hailed by the TLS as "a storehouse of information" - the first comprehensive, documented study of the whole field of British sculpture between the Restoration and the Great Exhibition. By the time it reappeared (revised but again undated) in 1968, Gunnis was dead and scholars had begun to wonder who - if anybody - would extend his pioneering dictionary into the High Victorian and Edwardian eras. Well, we still await a Dictionary of Victorian and Edwardian Sculptors. But at long last Gunnis has a successor: a young scholar takes his place in a great - if mostly amateur - tradition: Sir Edmund Gosse, J. T. Smith, E. Beresford Chancellor, Mrs Arundell Esdaile, Rupert Gunnis, Margaret Whinney, Charles and Lavinia Handley-Read, John Physick, and now Benedict Read. Mr Read's credentials are impeccable: his father, Sir Herbert Read, was perhaps the most perceptive critic of sculpture since Winkelmänn; and he is himself deputy Witt Librarian at the Courtauld Institute.

Benedict Read begins by explaining that his critical standpoint is one of aesthetic neutrality: working in an academic "vacuum", he had to adopt a "disinterested" and a "somewhat idealistic approach" in which "the facts and the evidence" were allowed to "dictate" his interpretative structure. Happily, this mask of neutrality is easily pierced. His thesis turns out to be a powerful antidote to an overdose of Ruskin.

In his Edinburgh Lectures of 1853, Ruskin took up Pre-Raphaelite "reality" as a stick to beat Neo-Classical "modernism". In particular, he singled out Steell's recently erected equestrian statue of the Duke of Wellington - "the Iron Duke in bronze by Steell" - as the work of a "promising sculptor" - tainted with the affectation of Modernism: "one of the thousand equestrian statues of Modernism studied from the show-riders of the amphitheatre, with their horses on their hind-legs in the snow-dust". Amidst so much degeneracy there was one exception, Baron Carlo Marochetti: "a most definite exception... a thoroughly great sculptor". His "Richard Coeur de Lion" was "an ideal



Constance and Arthur, the Fairbairn children; their monument in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, by the Pre-Raphaelite sculptor Thomas Woolner dates from 1862. An illustration from the book reviewed here.

work of the highest beauty and value. Its erection... will tend more to educate the public eye and mind with respect to art, than anything we have done in London for centuries." Marochetti's statue had been displayed in the Great Exhibition, but Ruskin refused to be mollified: "I assure you there is more good and interesting sculpture in a single wing of a good thirteenth-century cathedral, than in ten great exhibitions." Ruskin confessed to finding "little pleasure in [sculpture] when unconnected with architecture, though he did consider Munro's bust of Acland "beautiful". Woolner's medallion of Carlyle very "like", and Woolner's bust of Tennyson "highly wrought". "Figure sculpture", he explained to J. J. Laing in 1854, "cannot now be introduced in architecture, because we have no costume, and our nakedness is ignoble,

so that our figure sculpture is necessarily mere imitation Greek or imitation medieval. It makes me feel as sick as if people were to feed me with meat that somebody else had chewed. We can have beasts, and plants - for beasts, thank God, still keep their own manners, and their old coats." By 1870 Ruskin's position, as Slade Professor, was more vehement still. "We have much excellent portrait sculpture", he admitted; "but portrait sculpture, which is nothing more, is always third-rate work, even when produced by men of genius... the state of sculpture in modern England, as compared with that of the great Ancients, is literally one of corrupt and dishonourable death... And", he informed his undergraduate audience, "the cause is your own frivolity. You... are interested only in bits,

balls, and oars... and... older persons [simply] worship... Money." Thirteen years later his enthusiasm for Pre-Raphaelite sculpture had been much diminished, but his admiration for Marochetti was greater than ever. Here was a sculptor "trained to perfectness of knowledge and perception in the structure of the human body", with, in addition, a "peculiar delight in the harmonies of line which express its easy and powerful motion". "Coeur de Lion" was still "the only really interesting piece of historical sculpture which we have... given to our City populace". In fact, looking back on a youthful conversation with Marochetti at Denmark Hill in 1855, the Slade Professor felt almost ashamed. He had tried to convert Marochetti to Pre-Raphaelite principles by showing him Rossetti's drawings for "Lancelot and Guinevere at the Grave of King Arthur"; these must have seemed no better than "a knave of Clubs and Queen of Diamonds" to such a three-dimensionally minded sculptor.

Benedict Read quotes little of this. "Moving away from Ruskin", he remarks, can be "a salutary exercise". The critical approach of Palgrave, Gosse and Spielmann is more to his taste. His heart is with the New Sculpture of Leighton and Gilbert, Frampton and Ford, Thornycroft, Romney and Brock. He admires Woolner and the Pre-Raphaelites, but he finds Marochetti "flashy" and "tricky". "Coeur de Lion" (his cover picture) is the very embodiment of "flashy trickiness". And as for another of Ruskin's favourites, George Timeworth, he is dismissed - in the best phrase in the book - as a mere "Marochetti in clogs". Such forthright judgments make refreshing reading after a good many deadpan lists. "If Leighton was the fairy godfather of the New Sculpture", Read concludes, "Boehm was its wicked stepfather. When Marochetti died in 1867, Boehm succeeded him as the *bête noire* of British sculptors, another flashy, tricky foreigner with friends in high places."

Foreign sculptors there were in plenty at the court of Queen Victoria. Apart from the Franco-Italian Marochetti and the Hungarian Boehm, there was the French nobleman Baron Henri de Triqueti; lesser lights included another Hungarian, Engel, a Belgian, Geefs, and at least three Germans: Wolff, Troschel and Müller. Hardly names to conjure with now. But such has been the neglect of Victorian sculpture until very recently that even the names of the leading Pre-Raphaelite sculptors are scarcely more familiar: Thomas Woolner, Alexander Munro, J. L. Tupper, John Hancock,

Bernhard Smith, Bernhard Who? He even signed himself Bernhard Smith PRB. Thanks to Benedict Read they may soon be as carefully studied as the Irish brothers O'Shea.

There is certainly plenty of recondite information here. Read is especially good on patronage and on what might be called the logistics of the sculptor's art. Which sculptor became Governor of the Falkland Islands? (George Rennie). Which sculptor died on Warrington railway station? (Patrick Park). Which sculptor is immortalized in Ford Madox Brown's "The Last of England"? (Thomas Woolner). Which members of the Royal Family were also amateur sculptors? (Prince Albert and Princess Louise).

In one field, however, *Victorian Sculpture* was published too soon to profit from recent research: the circle of sculptors inspired by William Burges - Nicholls, Philip, Tupper, Pyffers, Fucigna and McLeod - will have to be more extensively treated in any future edition, as will Burges's sculptural masterpiece, Cork Cathedral.

Of course there are errors: Gunnis's *Dictionary* was published in 1953, not 1951; Marochetti's "Coeur de Lion" stands not in New Palace Yard (where Marochetti wanted to put it) but in Old Palace Yard (where Barry determined it should go); and there are occasional infelicities: "the Guildhall" for Guildhall, "Florence - Baptistery - Door - type quatrefoil", "Scott sculpture team". But slips like these - godsend for nitpicking reviewers with nothing else to say - do not detract from the value of this impressive volume. Sometimes the critical language droops a little: Thornycroft's "General Gordon", once on Trafalgar Square, now on the Embankment, is more than "an amazing portrayal of Victorian values"; the explosive "Hounds in Leash", by Harry Bates, in the forecourt of Gosford House, has more than just "determined energy". And every Victorian enthusiast will have his favourite omission. Where is the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore? Where is Munro's ethereal medallion portrait of Benjamin Woodard in the University Museum, Oxford? Where is that other extraordinary Oxford item, Hungerford Pollen's Pre-Raphaelite tympanum in Banbury Road? And where is the Wedgwood Institute at Burslem, Staffs, pulsating with sculpture by Rudyard Kipling's father? In fact, where is Kipling's father?

But enough of such quibbling. This is a splendid book, beautifully produced, lavishly illustrated, professionally indexed, carefully documented and lucidly written.

discusses a subject which has never before received a monograph or even an article entirely devoted to it as a general field of study. Once again John Pemberton writes extended captions to the thirty fine colour plates of pieces that were also recently displayed at the Pace Gallery.

The early use of beads by the Yoruba during the Classical Period at Ife (1000-1500) is revealed by the bronze and terracotta which often show the Onis heavily adorned with them, and this has been confirmed by archaeological finds. The tradition seems to have waned and then flourished again with the introduction of seed-beads from Europe in the nineteenth century. In contrast to the sculpture, it is almost impossible to recognize different hands at work, though Fagg makes a very persuasive case for ascribing a magnificent and somewhat unusual beaded crown in the Tishman collection to the great woodcarver Olowe, who died in 1938.

The emphasis in *Nigeria and the Evolution of Money* by Ekpo Eyo (117pp, The Federal Department of Antiquities, Lagos: available from Ethnographica, 19 Westbourne Road, Longbridge, N7 8AN, £7.50) is archaeological and ethnographic. Chapters on pre-colonial currencies of Oceania, Asia, Europe and the Americas are included, together with a detailed analysis of pre-gold barter objects of West Africa.

# Disquiet along the Don

Jane Grayson

## HERMAN ERMOLAEV

Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art  
375pp. Princeton University Press.  
£20.10.  
0 691 07634 0

Sholokhov's literary biography poses some tricky questions. For the Soviet ideologue there is, first of all, the problem of his political orthodoxy. A pillar of the Soviet literary establishment, Sholokhov has been canonized as a classic exponent of Socialist Realism, yet his greatest work, *The Quiet Don*, has neither the revolutionary uplift, nor the optimism, to be easily accommodated within this prescriptive aesthetic. Admittedly, *The Quiet Don* is an epic, and the young Soviet state thirsted for large forms to convey the grandeur of its achievement. (Did not even Pasternak write in 1927 that he was transferring from lyrical thinking to epic, regarding this as the genre appropriate to the times in which he lived?) But the book's hero Grigory Melekhov, is no "positive hero", and the grand sweep of the novel is not upwards to the "gleaming"/"yawning" heights of socialism - it is undeniably tragic.

Ideology apart, any critic is faced with the awkward issue of the marked superiority of this one work to anything else Sholokhov has written, a superiority so marked, in fact, that doubts have even been raised as to whether Sholokhov was its real author. How could (the argument goes) a young man of twenty-two, with only three years of secondary education and limited experience of life, possibly be the author of a work of such scope and depth? It is an old controversy, dating back to 1928 when the first two parts of the novel appeared. In recent years it has been given a new lease of life by Solzhenitsyn, who arranged in 1974 for

the publication in the West of the findings of a certain "D\*", a Soviet literary scholar. D\* (who died without completing his work) makes out a case for the real author being the Don Cossack writer Fyodor Krivokov (1870-1920) and for Sholokhov being only the "co-author". For Sholokhov's book (now translated as *Problems in the Literary Biography of Mikhail Sholokhov*, 1977) in which the Krivokov hypothesis is subjected to a detailed, sober, yet sympathetic examination.

It requires little imagination to appreciate how important is the genuineness of Sholokhov's authorship for the prestige of official Soviet literature. It is as important as the authenticity of the medieval epic, *The Lay of Prince Igor*, for Russian national pride. Whilst there has been no overt counter to these charges in the Soviet press (apparently, a policy decision was made not to enter into direct polemic with these "heretics"), most recent publications have conducted a transparently obvious propaganda campaign. One of the most amusing instances of this has been the search for prototypes for Sholokhov's characters - a search organized by the Soviet authorities, but intended to look like a spontaneous action of local enthusiasts prompted by the seventieth anniversary of the author's birth in 1975. Equally, however, it is clear that a case of disputed authorship such as this is excellent ammunition for the anti-Soviet camp - for the adherents of an obvious target, not just because he is the most respected living Soviet author, but because of the hard-line position he has adopted on literary matters in recent years. It was Sholokhov who pronounced Pasternak "a hermit crab" at the time of the Zhigvay affair. He was later to describe Solzhenitsyn as "a Colorado beetle that eats Soviet bread but serves

his Western bourgeois masters by secretly sending his writing abroad". And as for Solzhenitsyn and Daniel, they, "had they been caught in the 1920s, would have been shot". After this last sortie it became quite the thing among the more rebellious Soviet youth to "return their ticket" if they picked out a question on *Virgin Soil Upturned* in examinations, thereby forfeiting the possibility of gaining maximum marks.

Herman Ermolaev is refreshingly free from all this *parti pris*. In his substantial monograph he sets out to give a full and unprejudiced assessment of Sholokhov's career and achievement in the light of all the available evidence. From this objective standpoint he does not have to whitewash his subject, nor vilify him. He can criticize Sholokhov's political extremism, the crudities of his style and the falling-off of his talent, while at the same time defending the vigour and the simple power of his world view.

With this question of "available evidence", however, the reader meets his first stumbling-block. There would seem, alas, to be an impressive lack of available evidence. On crucial questions such as the sources of the historical material and the circumstances in which his archive was lost in 1942, Sholokhov has remained either unforthcoming, or else has made contradictory pronouncements. There are even varying accounts in circulation of the age of his parents when they married, or his position in the family (was he an only child, or was he the youngest of eight?).

Happily, Professor Ermolaev displays seemingly limitless patience in sifting through the divergent accounts, and he carefully collates historical sources with the text of *The Quiet Don* to indicate the extent of Sholokhov's probable borrowings and his manipulation of factual material. Ermolaev also has the advantage of

private "informants" who knew Sholokhov at certain periods of his life; and he can even, for his account of the wartime experience of life in the Don region. All this patience, deductive skill and personal testimony, however, are no substitute for hard fact or direct contact. This is a forgivable, but undeniable limitation of the book. What is less forgivable is that on occasion the researcher in Ermolaev takes over from the biographer and critic, and makes for a special kind of academic "unfreedom". This happens in the section on "Style and Structure". There is very little on structure and a great deal on style, involving an elaborate statistical comparison of Sholokhov's imagery with that of six Soviet writers and Lev Tolstoy. The point seems to be to establish that Sholokhov is a twentieth-century man and not a nineteenth-century man, a case which might fairly be regarded as already proven.

Nor on closer examination can Ermolaev's approach be admitted to be quite as objective as he makes out. If it is important for ideologues to believe in their man, this is equally true of academics. And Ermolaev is clearly keen to make a strong case for *The Quiet Don*'s authenticity. Given the evidence at present available this is not a case which can be finally proven either way, as both Sholokhov's detractors and Ermolaev himself admit. However, he marshals a great deal of evidence in support of his claim, including some to demonstrate Sholokhov's lack of competence as a historian and his grammatical inaccuracies (this is among the most entertaining sections), while devoting his final chapter to a painstaking assault on the Solzhenitsyn-Medvedev position. In the latter case, however, he is not being entirely fair. Solzhenitsyn obviously has an axe to grind, but Medvedev's attitude is a good deal more open-minded than Ermolaev makes out, and a large part

of the Medvedev book is in fact directed against D\*'s hypothesis.

A final constraint upon the book is that it does have its own ideological bias. Ermolaev ascribes the deterioration of Sholokhov's writing and productivity in latter years quite simply to "the grip of ideology". The decrease in artistic quality of his works, he states, "is in direct proportion to the increase of their propagandist function." To blame a writer's decline primarily on his commitment to a political doctrine is, surely, a gross over-simplification. A whole story could and has been told of the literary casualties of the Soviet régime - the silences and the slencings, the internal emigrés, the dissidents, the time-servers - but every individual case is different and Sholokhov's case, for lack of evidence, stands. Did he begin to write badly because he became a devoted Communist, or because he wrote himself out, or because he took to drink? That Sholokhov had a drink problem is attested, and it is certainly a plausible explanation for his indifference to the publication of the bowdlerized version of *The Quiet Don* in 1953.

All these are matters for speculation and yet Ermolaev eschews speculation. While acknowledging these alternative explanations, he seems loath to leave his subject in the limbo of uncertainty. But until more is made known both of Sholokhov's personal life and his beliefs this, surely, is where he must remain. "We shall probably have to wait until his death for anything like a complete picture of Sholokhov's private life": this was the view of D. H. Stewart in his 1967 monograph. Stewart's account is lacking the dimension which Ermolaev offers with his knowledge of Russian, his analysis of the revived authenticity issue, but in the perceptiveness and the balance of its critical judgment it remains this book's superior.

# Tribal treasures

J. B. Donne

WILLIAM FAGG AND JOHN PEMBERTON III

Yoruba Sculpture of West Africa  
Edited by Bryce Holcomb

280pp, with 35 colour plates and 78 black-and-white illustrations. Collins. £18.  
0 00 216637 2

WILLIAM FAGG

Koruba Beadwork: Art of Nigeria  
Edited by Bryce Holcomb

99pp, with 30 colour plates and 15 black-and-white illustrations. Lund Humphries, Paperback, £6.95.  
0 85331 443 8

*Yoruba: Sculpture of West Africa* is one of the most important books on any aspect of African art to appear for many years, possibly since William Fagg's own monumental *Sculpture of Africa* of 1958. The text consists of a reprint or else conflation of all Fagg's major writings on Yoruba art, from "De l'art des Yoruba" (1951), now published in English for the first time to his *obit script* which have been appearing regularly in Christie's tribal art catalogues since he became a consultant to the auction house on his retirement as Keeper of the

Department of Ethnography at the British Museum.

"On the Art of the Yoruba" reads better in its English original than in the French version. Fagg's highly conscious, almost Augustan style, combined with a subtle humour, must have been intractable material for his translator. The article is reproduced almost in its entirety: apart from two sentences referring to a strange Gelede gorilla mask - "In chose la plus intéressante que je vis à Aiyetoro". Fagg has also added a few notes which modify or supplement some of his earlier statements.

The other two articles, "The Yoruba and their Past" and "The Yoruba Artist: Regional Styles", have been compounded from extracts from a number of Fagg's publications ranging over the years 1951-61. Though highly readable and informative, the articles reveal signs that certain editorial problems have not been properly resolved. For example, the statement that "Afo mother-and-child fertility figures" were widely mistaken for Yoruba work until their identification three years ago, is reprinted unchanged from a publication of 1955. Again, repetition and a certain awkwardness arise when part of a descriptive note from a Christie's catalogue of 1976 introduces selections from a paper of 1951 without any role of explanation. But such infelicities are a small price to pay for a book which, though it will never entirely supplant

the original texts, makes available once again a mass of material and information which has for long been almost completely inaccessible.

Perhaps Fagg's greatest achievement has been not only his recognition and analysis of the various sub-styles of Yoruba art, but his rediscovery of the artists themselves and his attribution of so many works to individual hands. He has thus proved once and for all that, contrary to earlier European conceptions based on ignorance and prejudice, African art is not a product of anonymity, but of schools, workshops, families and great artists, as much so as the art of the Italian Renaissance. In the second half of the book, John Pemberton has applied Fagg's knowledge and methodology, which he combines with his own ten years' experience in the field, to long descriptive notes devoted to the identification, attribution and examples of Yoruba sculpture which were put on show at the Pace Gallery in New York earlier this year. Now that we are led by the hand, the differences between the work of Agbonifo of Efon-Alaye, Aráwogun of Osí, Olowe, or Agunwa of Oke-Igbara, or the powerful early and dispirited late works of Bamgboye, appear self-evident. But this was not so thirty years ago. Besides the identification of individual carvers, Pemberton is particularly strong on expounding ritual use and religious significance (he

is himself Professor of Religion at Amherst College, Massachusetts).

But the eternal problem presented by any attempt to discuss African thought and beliefs in a European language and in terms ultimately derived from Greek philosophy, is that of translating the original texts. A literal rendering is often so obscure as to be meaningless:

Odulebe [destructive mother], I, I who honor you today.

Sick bird did not warm herself by the fire. Something secret was buried in the mother's house.

Mother whose vagina causes fear to all. Mother whose public hair bundles up in knots.

Mother who sets a trap, sets a trap. Mother who had meat at home in lumps. Such a passage would demand a far lengthier commentary than Pemberton is able to provide before its true significance could penetrate the European mind, though his discussion of women considered, by men, as both mothers and witches and feared by them, takes us some way along the road. But as it stands the poem can do little more than attract us by what seems to us its surreal imagery. Nevertheless, Pemberton's comments throughout are invaluable in offering an insight into the complexity of Yoruba religion and mythology.

In *Yoruba Beadwork*, William Fagg

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## The gentleman historian

Keith Robbins

FRANK EYCK

G. P. Gooch: A Study in History and Politics  
498pp. Macmillan. £8.95.  
0 333 30849 2

"By far and away our ablest historian" wrote Ramsay MacDonald of G. P. Gooch in a moment of discerning release from the affairs of state. Conscious that such a verdict from such a source might find few echoes over half a century later, Frank Eyck has weighed in with some contemporary support. It can at least be said that he has written by far and away the lengthiest study of a twentieth-century British historian. Deep in Alberta, the flame of devotion has never flickered ever since he began work in 1908, the year of Gooch's death. The book is a personal and professional tribute, full of worthy sentiments. No one else could have done the job with such exemplary patience and persistence and, in all probability, Eyck on Gooch will have few competitors in the future. His book will enable Mrs Thatcher, if she has a spare moment, to contemplate the judiciousness of her predecessor's estimate - though one fears that the hierarchy of historical reputations is not high on her agenda.

It is, however, odd to suppose that historians are as interesting as the people they write about. Certainly Gooch himself did not take adequate steps to give a biographer much intimate information. In the family archive there are some letters from friends and colleagues, but he did not set much store by his own efforts and took few copies. In general, he seems to have been as fond of his wastepaper basket as A. J. P. Taylor claims to be - the only thing the two men have in common. Eyck has diligently scoured the British Isles and the Continent for literary traces of his hero and it seems, fortunately, that German historians do feel obliged to add posterity by leaving substantial private papers for consultation. Even so, the trail is rather disappointing and Eyck has basically had to rely on printed materials and Gooch's own writings. He has also been able to conduct a series of interviews with scholars, now a small band, who knew Gooch in his prime. Additionally, of course, Eyck states that he saw a good deal of Gooch during the last third of his life, although he confesses that only when writing the biography did he become fully aware of the range of the historian's interests and activities.

Gooch was born in 1873 and his first book, *The History of English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century*, was published in 1898. Not many historians have the anguish of seeing their first work reprinted nearly seventy years later, but Gooch did have that privilege. Longevity, however, is a handicap. Although he remained mentally agile into old age, he had outlived most of the contemporaries with whom comparison might be appropriate. It was difficult to believe that the books, and essays which appeared in the 1950s and 1960s were not posthumous publications, for they showed a sublime detachment from what was then current scholarship. It was thought, however, that a mere publisher or executor would have been alarmed at the lack of correspondence between the title of a book and the essays contained therein. *Courts and Cabinets* (1944) is an indication of his later preoccupations and it was entirely appropriate that he should talk to the Queen - about continuity - before receiving the much-told ribbon of the Order of Merit. His own autobiographical memoir, *Under the Reign* (1958), itself drew attention in its title to his awkward achievement, though it was an odd autobiography in that it showed little interest in the author. It perhaps fair not to dwell on these decades since, as Eyck says, Gooch was enjoying life and it is not necessary to challenge the author's portentious title that this was "his undelivered life".

As a career, Gooch's story is odd, though that was not quite what he intended. He began conventionally enough at Eton, but something went wrong. Eyck suspects that even at school young George possessed early intimations of the glories of *Allgemeinbildung*, though he found few of his contemporaries or masters similarly caught up. Conscious that they had a precocious, or at least unsocial child, his parents allowed him instead to live at home and attend the General Literature Department at King's College, London. He then moved on to Trinity, Cambridge. John Cowper Powys, a contemporary, soon formed the view that Gooch had "an astounding brain": there was something monstrous about the man's learning. It was only appropriate that he had a picture of Goethe in his rooms in King's Parade. Cunningham and Seeley particularly impressed him as an undergraduate. His first in the Historical Tripos in 1894 was inevitable and he then set about acquiring various university scholarships and essay prizes. One of these efforts awarded Thackeray at best a beta for living unmoved and unaffected through the years that witnessed the coming age of democracy, the progress of science and the birth of the Comparative Method. Gooch was not awarded the prize. He had better luck with a piece on Daniel Defoe, who gained an alpha as "one of the initiators of a widely beneficial movement, the education of women".

Just before giving up residence, Gooch heard Acton deliver his inaugural lecture in June 1895 and resolved, after a period of Continental travel, to make his acquaintance. The encounter took place at the Athenaeum in January 1896. Gooch wrote a letter of thanks stating that, although fond of some of the Cambridge history dons, they could not help on any subject at all off the beaten track. Acton's advice was of a different order. Eyck claims that there then began "a close friendship" only terminated by Acton's death in 1902. This is an exaggeration, although it is true that Acton did comment on Gooch's plans and the young scholar looked up yet more references in libraries for the master. Eyck is apt to talk of Gooch's friends throughout the book, though frequently in contexts where it is difficult to believe that some of the people were more than acquaintances. In this respect, however, he is only following Gooch's own habits.

His "close friend" Lord Acton failed to persuade the electors of Trinity in 1897 to elect him to a fellowship - G. M. Trevelyan secured the first fellowship a year later. At the time, it was a bitter disappointment, but Gooch later argued that if he had been anchored in Cambridge he would have missed the wider experiences and opportunities of London life. He had the means to conduct himself as an independent scholar, his father had been a partner in the City banking firm of the American George Peabody. It was this financial background which made his subsequent career possible. Since it was so important it is a little surprising that no attempt is made by the author to quantify the wealth involved. Not that there was any disposition to consume conspicuously. Gooch worked with an intensity which sometimes afflicts those who have no need to work at all. He married a German art student in 1903 and established her in an upper-middle-class style in Campden Hill Road. It was a well-run and suitably staffed household. The master usually managed to answer his letters by return of post.

By this time, however, the Liberal spring was imminent and Gooch was determined to be part of it. He had already taken to political dining and mild journalism. The electors of Bath responded to this "gentleman" as Gooch described himself on his nomination papers in 1906; but they failed to do so in both elections in 1910. In his short career as an MP he expressed views on the vital issues of the day: Irish Home Rule, South Africa, India, limitation of armaments, Balkans, the Young Turks, Socialism, Liberty, Old Age Pensions, Exchanges, legislation, Labour, Workmen's Sweated Wages, Lords. The children and the House of Lords. The author "clears up" any lingering doubts which may exist about

Gooch's position on these matters. In addition, he kept pursuing ministers about the need for systematic moral instruction in elementary schools - something that exercised him after leaving Parliament. After his failures at Bath in 1910 he attempted to succeed Rufus Isaacs in the Reading by-election of 1913, but found himself carried away on a torrent of Conservative biscuits. The idea of a parliamentary career was then abandoned.

Nevertheless, throughout the rest of his life he continued to be a semi-public man. In 1911 he became co-editor of the *Contemporary Review*, a journal which was to offer him a platform for many decades. Eyck meticulously chronicles the opinions expressed in its pages by Gooch and others. Naturally, the war was a source of particular pain to Gooch for personal reasons. He did not accept the term employed by his "old friend" Lord Haldane that Germany was his spiritual home, preferring to describe it as his "second country". He was not a pacifist but, as he put it with characteristic succinctness, he hoped at the end of the war that the peoples of Europe would form a partnership of nations, that they would create that *Respublica Christiana* which formed the most fruitful contribution of the Middle Ages to the theory of civilization. What he actually got was the Treaty of Versailles in his view a French imposition which was so severe that it made a reaction against it in Germany inevitable. There was no necessity for that settlement and little excuse. Gooch expressed these views freely, particularly after 1933 when he became President of the National Peace Council. In Eyck's opinion he had no illusions about the internal situation in Germany but it took him "quite some time" to wake up to the ultimate aims of Hitler's foreign policy. By 1941 he was himself writing that there had been too little firmness when Hitler came to the helm. A good deal had happened in the interval. His approach to the diplomacy of this decade was rather disappointing in the author's view. *Century of British Foreign Policy and Studies in Diplomacy and Statecraft*. Newspapers at the time of the Reading by-election in 1913 had formed the opinion that Gooch's forte was history and not politics. Nothing that Gooch said between the wars would cause one to disagree with the *Berksire Chronicle*.

It is right, therefore, that this consideration of "A Study in History and Politics" should return to Gooch as a historian. *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (1913), if it did not captivate the electors of Reading, was a considerable achievement in describing and assessing the movement of historiography. To say that it put Gooch at once in the front rank of historians is an overstatement, but it is a work which is still read, or at least consulted. Gooch himself thought that it represented his most important contribution to historical writing. Eyck states that he found himself unable to give a full summary of the book, though there must be some readers who will feel that thirty pages, plus ten on the reactions it evoked, is sufficient to whet the appetite. The fame brought by this volume, together with his studies of pre-1914 diplomacy, led his "friend" Ramsay MacDonald to issue his definitive judgment and enrol Gooch for the major task of compiling the *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*. The trials and tribulations accompanying the execution of this project form the most fascinating chapter in the book and must be compulsory reading for all who must be compulsive readers for all who already taken to these sources. Here is Gooch's enduring legacy, though he would not be flattered to be told so.

A *Charterhouse Miscellany*, compiled by R. W. Arrowsmith, (256pp. Century Books. £9.95. 0 85014 087 2) has recently been published. The work presents a picture of life at Charterhouse since its foundation through extracts from letters, journals, memoirs and other printed sources. Robert Birley, headmaster of the school from 1935 to 1937, contributed an article on "Charterhouse during the Second World War" and E. E. Hartson writes on "Charterhouse 1945-1981". The book is liberally illustrated in black and white.

There is more to the problem of personal identity than meets the eye. In particular, there is a great deal more than ever gets mentioned in philosophy courses, in spite of a mass of very detailed articles on the subject. Among other things, there is a connection with the existence of evil, on account of the existence of evil. And among the Shadows, one who seems to me to be rather unjustly neglected is Mr Hyde. Any crash course on the nature of evil would, of course, acknowledge a great debt to the Scots. But in considering that debt, critics are inclined to treat *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as a lightweight. It is worth while taking a second look at it.

What Stevenson brings out is the negativity of evil. This, of course, is an old philosophical insight. As Plato put it, only good is real. Evil is simply the absence of good, and, in spite of its magnificent pretensions, it is itself a squalid nothing. That does not make it less frightening, but more so. Like darkness and cold, it destroys but it cannot replace. Mephistopheles, when Faust asks him who he is, replies "I am the spirit that always says No".

The thought is old, but we do not take its point. In Stevenson's story, Hyde's first appearance shows it sharply: Street after street and all the folks asleep. . . All at once I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumbling along eastwards at a good walk, and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten who was running as hard as she was able down a cross street. Well sir, the two ran into one another naturally enough at the corner; and then came the horrible part of the thing; for the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. What makes it so is not deliberate cruelty, but callousness - the total absence of a normal human response. David Hume (another Edinburgh man) asked "Would any man, who is walking along, tread as willingly on another's gaiter, toes, whom he has no quarrel with, as on the hard flint and pavement?" Well, here is that man, and his own is central to his character. As Jekyll puts it, when he is eventually driven to attempt a choice between his two lives.

Hyde was indifferent to Jekyll, or remembered him as the mountain bandit remembers the cavern in which he conceals himself from pursuit. Jekyll had more than a father's interest (because he shared Hyde's pleasures); Hyde had more than a son's indifference.

This is why, although Hyde has a soul boiling with causeless hatreds, and a body that seemed not strong enough to contain the raging energies of life. . . (Jekyll) thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only harsh but inorganic. This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices, that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life. This fearful limitation is, of course, the reason why he cannot choose to settle for Hyde, but must continue the doomed effort to be Jekyll. He notes it again, as he draws his memoirs to a close: Should the throes of change take me in the act of writing this Hyde will tear it in pieces; but if some time shall have elapsed after I have laid it by, his wonderful selflessness and circumscription to the moment will probably save it again from the action of his ape-like spite.

Hyde, appalling though he is, is no principally Lucifer; he is meanly subtle. Mention of the "ape" here has its usual negative point. Symbolic animals stand simply for the absence of certain human powers and feelings, even though in real life actual animals may share these. Most animals in fact avoid trampling others underfoot, as has been noticed with

## Viewpoint: Selves and shadows

Mary Midgley

annoyance when people have wanted to make horses or elephants do it. In the animal kingdom, Hyde is something special. But his specialness does not consist in a new, exciting and positive motivation. It is an emotional crippling, a partial death of his faculties.

What has produced this crippling? It resulted in fact from a certain rather casual miscalculation on the part of Jekyll. (I think this casualness is what prevents some people from taking the story seriously. But the story is surely about the casualness, rather than being an expression of it.) Jekyll found, early in life, that his ambition was in conflict with his taste for dissipation, and decided to try and separate these two motives so that each could pursue its interests without hindrance from the other. He therefore accepted, and still accepts to the end, the proposition that "man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond this point. . . (but perhaps) man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens." But of course he does not accept this idea seriously and literally as requiring a full, impartial separation. He sees it chiefly as providing a splendid disguise, which will allow the Jekyll his fun while protecting his reputation and his complacency. (This is where the casualness comes in.)

"I do not think I ever met Mr Hyde," asked Utterson.

"Oh dear no sir. He never dines here," replied the butler. "Indeed we see very little of him on this side of the house; he mostly comes and goes by the laboratory."

And again, "The moment I choose, I can be rid of Mr Hyde. I give you my hand upon that." That, certainly, was Jekyll's plan for the relationship. And therefore his "discovery" of duality means merely something which others have noted out before him, namely, the hypothesis that *it doesn't matter what you do with your shadow*. Peter Schlemihl sold his shadow to the Devil, never supposing that he would miss it. He soon found out his mistake. Dorian Gray let his picture absorb the effects of his iniquities, supposing that he could ignore it, but it got him in the end. The dismissed Shadow in Hans Andersen's story came back after many years, having grown a

new body, though a thin one. It was servile at first, but grew rapidly more and more domineering, and reduced its former owner to the status of its shadow. When he tried to resist, it killed him. It is well known that you can't be too careful about these things. But the project of shadow immunity which throws most light on Jekyll's is another Scottish one, James Hogg's novel, *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.

This is altogether a deeper affair. The Sinner, Robert Wringhim, has accepted with his whole heart the doctrine of justification by faith alone. He then becomes convinced of his own salvation, and thus believes himself to be henceforward incapable of sin. Going out to give thanks to God for this state of affairs, he is stopped by a mysterious stranger, his exact double. This person deflects him from his purpose by flattering words ("I am come to be a humble disciple of yours; to be initiated into the true way of salvation by conversing with you, and perhaps of being assisted by your prayers.") Instead of joining Wringhim in thanking God, he points out to him that he is now a highly exceptional and privileged person, incapable of sin, and therefore free to commit every possible kind of action without blame. Are there not therefore remarkable acts to which he is called? Wringhim who already believes most of those around him to be worthless enemies of the Lord, predestined to damnation, has no defence against the suggestion that it is his duty to kill many of them, including his own family. And this, in spite of his timidity and some other natural objections, he is finally led on to do.

The ingenious use of Calvin's doctrine thus provides Wringhim's shadow-self with a quite exceptionally wide scope for exemption from responsibility. Dorian Grey's exemption covered only his appearance. Jekyll's even in his most prosperous days, covered only the exploits of Hyde. His own life had still to be lived normally on its previous lines. But Wringhim (or the Devil who counsels him) has so arranged things that his whole active life is to be immune from judgment and from serious consequences.

Two points emerge. One, that the price of this playground is high. Freed from consequences and from judgment, action altogether loses its

meaning. Wringhim is very mad indeed. Two, that what he pays this price for is, again, something utterly squalid and negative. It is nothing but a string of pointless murders. The fate of all souls being already fixed, it is not even clear why cutting off the wicked in their prime should have the slightest value. It is certainly a mean, unoriginal and disappointing enterprise, judged against the glittering hints dropped by the mysterious stranger, to whom Wringhim, in spite of his new-found importance and freedom, soon finds that he is a slave. Trying to get a hold on events, he asks the stranger for his name:

"I have no parents save one, whom I do not acknowledge," said he proudly. "Therefore, pray drop that subject, for it is a disagreeable one. I am a being of a very peculiar temper, for, though I have servants and subjects more than I can number, yet, to gratify a certain whim, I have left them and retired to this city, and, for all the society which it contains, you see I have attached myself only to you. This is a secret. . . pray let it remain one, and say not another word about the matter."

It immediately struck me that this was no other than the Czar Peter of Russia. . . I had henceforward great and mighty hopes of high preferment, as a defender and avenger of the oppressed Christian church, under the influence of this great potentate.

Vanity is the key to Wringhim's enslavement. And it plays a central part also in that of Jekyll, who is throughout happy to sacrifice the whole integrity of his being for the sake of his spotless reputation. Vanity comes upon him at a fatal juncture, when he has for a time renounced Hyde and been living as himself, but has finally weakened and indulged, in his own shape, in a night on the tiles. Next morning the Regent's Park was full of winter chrysanthemums and sweet with spring odours. I sat in the sun on a bench; the animal within me licking the chops of memory; the spiritual side a little drowsed, promising subsequent penitence, but not yet moved to begin. After all, I reflected, I was like my neighbours; and then I smiled, comparing myself with other men, comparing my active good-will with the lazy cruelty of their neglect. And at the very moment of that vain, glorious thought, a quiver came over me, a horrid nausea and the most deadly shuddering. . . I was once more Edward Hyde.

The trouble is not, of course, that vanity is the worst of the vices. It is just that it is the one which makes admitting all the others unbearable, and so leads to the shadow-shedding project. And the reason this project is doomed is because, as Jung sensibly points out, shadows have a function.

Painful though it is, this (unwelcome self-knowledge) is in itself a gain - for what is inferior or even worthless belongs to me as my shadow and gives me substance and mass. How can I be substantial if I fail to cast a shadow? I must have a dark side also if I am to be whole; and inasmuch as I become conscious of my shadow I also remember that I am a human being like any other (*Modern Mail in Search of a Soul*, p 40.)

The acknowledged shadow may be terrible enough. But it is the unacknowledged one that is the real killer. These are warnings. Let me end by mentioning another. Philosophers write a great deal about personal identity. They use for this purpose a mass of fanciful examples, which they develop with immense ingenuity and logical subtlety. But in doing so they nearly always manage - in the teeth of enormous difficulties - to avoid touching on any topic of the slightest natural interest, or throwing any light on the terrible complexities of human motivation. Jekyll was partly right; we are each not only one but many. Might not this fact deserve a little more philosophical attention?

John Leveti

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# The bonding process

Anthony Storr

COLIN MURRAY PARKES and  
JOAN STEVENSON-HINDE (Editors)  
The Place of Attachment in Human  
Behaviour  
331pp. Tavistock. £14.  
0 422 77600 9

It is now clear that John Bowlby's *Attachment and Loss* (Hogarth Press: 1969, 1973, 1980) is the most valuable contribution to psychodynamic understanding since Freud. This important collection of papers is a kind of *Festschrift*, since the various authors severally acknowledge Bowlby's work as their inspiration.

Bernard Berenson once defined genius as "the capacity for productive reaction against one's training". Bowlby may or may not possess genius, but his capacity precisely corresponds with Berenson's definition. Bowlby was trained as a psychoanalyst, and worked for many years at the Tavistock Clinic. He was analysed by Joan Riviere, and supervised by Melanie Klein. Psychoanalysis, especially of the Kleinian variety, too often transforms its trainees into converts perpetually concerned with the minutiae of their faith, but quite unable to criticize it or extend its perspective. Bowlby, while acknowledging the genius of Freud, was never a convert, and, though practising as a psychoanalyst, did not lose the capacity to criticize the concepts on which his practice was based. As he writes in his epilogue to this collection of papers, "Psychoanalysis gave weight to the internal workings of the human mind and recognized the special status of intimate human relationships, but its metapsychology, already obsolescent, was a major handicap, while its fixation on a single, retrospective research

method gave no means of resolving differences of opinion." Bowlby's study of the nature of the child's tie to his mother started psychoanalytic thinking on a new path. His work on the effects of separation between small children and their mothers roused the conscience of the world, and had practical consequences in modifying the way in which children in hospitals were handled.

But it is Bowlby's marriage of ethology with psychoanalysis which has proved so successful in generating research, as the contents of this book attest. He has opened the door to combining the "soft", anecdotal data derived from the psychoanalytic study of disturbed adults and children, with the "hard" data obtained by the objective study of behaviour in both animals and humans. It is because Bowlby's stance is essentially cross-disciplinary that the contributors to this book include biologists and sociologists as well as psychologists and psychiatrists.

The term "attachment" itself derives from ethology. Attachment behaviour is defined as "any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or retaining proximity to some other differentiated and preferred individual". The attachment of the infant to his mother is the earliest and most crucial form of attachment which "gives rise to expectations and assumptions about the world, the effects of which will be felt throughout his life". But attachment remains a vital necessity throughout the lives of the majority of normal human beings; and broken or disturbed attachments are powerful instigators of distress, maladjustment, and mental illness. Attachment is not simply another word for love; and there is no reason to think that Freud was right in interpreting all significant relationships as sublimated or him-inhibited sexuality. As Robert S. Weiss affirms, in his chapter on

"Attachment in Adult Life", attachment and sexuality, though frequently enmeshed, "involve distinct behavioural systems", and two types of jealousy. While loss of a sexually desired person involves feelings of frustration, threatened loss of an attachment figure involves feelings of abandonment.

Peter Marris, in a chapter on "Attachment and Society", states that "the relationships which matter most to us... which we experience as unique and irreplaceable, seem to embody most crucially the meaning of our lives". It can be argued theoretically that it would be desirable to condition human beings to jettison such exclusiveness in favour of a more generally diffused, benign attachment to all the members of a society. But attempts at bringing this about, like the Onassis community, are doomed to failure. The nature of human attachment, from infancy onward, is such that attachment figures are irreplaceably "special".

Robert Hinde, whose recent work on attachment has extended itself from the study of sub-human primates to include human relationships, underlines the complexity of the field. There is no one biologically "best" style of mothering, for example, since different types of society demand different types of individual. Mothers, of course, are required to be protective, in order to guard the young

from danger; but, if their offspring are to become independent, they must also be required to sever the dependent tie, often before the young animal itself demands such a step.

The study of the formation and maintenance of attachment between mother and infant has now engaged the attention of obstetricians as well as that of psychologists. The first few hours after birth appear likely to be a sensitive period for firm bonding to occur. It is thought that some of the drugs conventionally given to mothers in labour may adversely affect the bonding process between mother and infant. One study shows that infants whose mothers have been encouraged to spend extra hours of contact with them during the days after their birth show an enhanced range of verbal skills in later childhood. There is evidence to suggest that women who have had more babies by Caesarian section find more difficulty in relating to them than those who have had a normal delivery. As Judith Trowell suggests, this may be connected with the longer time the former take to regain consciousness after having had an anaesthetic and an operation.

In the field of attachment theory, it is to be expected that many studies are concerned with bereavement. Children who lose a parent show all manner of behavioural disturbances from aggression to bed-wetting. Far too often, surviving parents find it difficult to tell the child the truth,

with the consequence that misunderstandings arise and distress is prolonged. According to George Brown, loss of the mother before the age of eleven renders women more liable to severe depression in the face of later reverses, perhaps because such early loss interferes with the establishment of a secure sense of self-esteem and self-reliance. Murray Parkes, well-known for his studies on bereavement, claims that skilled counselling can reduce the incidence of psychiatric disorder, especially in cases in which the bereaved person's family is unhelpful. Most people will recognize, from their own experience, cases of self-punitive grief which have become pathologically prolonged, like that of Queen Victoria. In fact, as Peter Marris puts it, "Losing someone you love is less like losing a very valuable and irreplaceable possession than like finding the law of gravity to be invalid... Grief is a reaction to the disintegration of the whole structure of meaning dependent on the relationship rather than to the absence of the person lost."

Freud's picture of the isolated individual wrestling with family instincts and making use of interchangeable others as instinctual outlets has been superseded. Attachment theory recognizes that no man is an island. It is only when we engage in close personal relationships that we can fully realize our own personalities.

## Peace between sexes

Mary Warnock

BETTY FRIEDAN

The Second Stage  
352pp. Michael Joseph. £8.95.  
0 7181 2139 2

Betty Friedan, whose *The Feminine Mystique* was published twenty years ago, has taken another look at the Women's Movement; or rather, if the claims implied both in the blurb and by herself are to be accepted, she has taken a first detached look at what she herself created and has written a mid-term report on her own child. *The Second Stage* has one very simple theme: for women, the achieving of independence and a satisfactory life does not entail antagonism to men. Men should now be seen, not as the enemy, but as the trusted ally.

This agreeable message is dragged out to considerable length. The style is flabby and tends to the rhetorical; and the book as a whole, being deeply American, translates uneasily to England, despite an explanatory introduction by Carolyn Falender and Sandra Brown. Though in this introduction women are called on to "seize the initiative now by making their feminist world stage for action", the British reaction to the second stage may well be that it is a fuss about nothing, a mountain made out of a molehill. Loud denigration of men, the shrill cries of those drawing up demarcation contracts over the housework, the crackle of burning bras or eye-brow pencils, none of these sounds were ever heard more than faintly in this country, and, when they were heard, they were dismissed as coming from the innate fringe (or that useful scapegoat, the small, disruptive minority). Equally, the defenders of family life against the feminists have not needed to be as insistent as they have been on the other side of the Atlantic.

But it would be wrong to dismiss all the problems discussed in this book as irrelevant or exaggerated. Even if, in America, there has been a greater degree of polarization, the feminist contra family, it cannot be denied that feminism, the "raising of consciousness", has had an enormous effect on English women, even the most dutiful and conservative. And the problem of reconciling a proper job, demanding ambition and the display of a bossy nature, with family responsibilities and the tendency to

give in, which is the mark of the successful wife, exists now, and has existed ever since the end of the Second World War. Moreover there is here, almost as commonly as in America, a type of "male" who is built up by the advertising profession, the man who will dominate, conversationally, sexually, in the committee room and on the road. It is particularly noticeable for us, on this side of the Atlantic, that when Margaret Thatcher dominates conversation, as she sometimes does, refusing absolutely to listen to the voice of others, she is thought of as being "unfeminine", and Mrs Friedan herself, in an *Observer* interview, spoke of her as exhibiting "the male model of leadership". Conversely, though Mrs Friedan does not place enough emphasis on this, there is still in existence the woman who lets the side down by insisting that "her husband wouldn't like it" if she stayed late at work, came to a staff-meeting after school, or lifted a heavy piece of equipment: the Little Woman is by no means dead.

Mrs Friedan is right to argue that the area within which these deeply ingrained attitudes must now be changed, if they can be, is the family; and if we are to be realistic, the concept of the family itself ought also to change. For it is no longer the case, and has not been for a long time, that the "true" or most typical family, consists of an earning father, a home-bound mother and two or three children. There is a vast number of families where both parents work; there are single-parent families; there are people living together unmarried, with or without a child. The very word "family" has become suspect. It has become an ad-man's word, inextricably bound up with cornflakes and late television viewing. But in this country it hasn't quite such gullible-producing power as it has in the United States. The demand for perfection, for perfect good-humour, understanding, kindness and "niceness", the domination of the dainty, has not had so powerful an effect here as in America. Perhaps the British are simply better prepared to put up with a bit of equality, dirt and untidiness than their American cousins. If so, this is a good thing. But if it is not, here, it is a bad thing.

But if the concept of family life is indeed to change, whether by the greater participation of men in domestic life, or by housing redesigned so that the extended family

can become a reality, with neighbours actually sharing the work and the amenities, as Mrs Friedan suggests, it is economic rather than feminist factors that will change it. Unemployment may turn out to be the great equalizer. It is no good being male, aggressive and ambitious if there is no job in which to display these characteristics. Indeed it is intolerable to be ambitious if there is a risk of remaining unemployed. Far better, and nicer, to decide that work isn't everything, and opt for a greater quality of life; and if this involves sharing the shopping, sitting in the laundrette with your book, or taking the babies to the park in the mornings, so much the more enjoyable. Men and women may well find themselves *faisant de mieux* in the same boat.

At the end of the second stage, Betty Friedan speculates about the consumer-market in such an equalized state of affairs. If women are no longer "kept", if they are no longer frustrated by their powerlessness outside the home, will they continue to demand more and more possessions? "Having", she implies, has been a substitute for "doing". If "personhood" (her word) goes with a less acquisitive mood, will Capitalism survive? My guess is that it will. But it would have been worth pursuing this line: The Economic Consequences of the Peace.

*The Evil Eye: A Folklore Casebook* edited by Alan Dundes (312pp. Garland Publishing. £30. 0 8240 9471 9) is the second volume in the Garland Folklore Casebooks series. It aims to give a selection of scholarly work from various academic disciplines on the subject of the evil eye. This subject has attracted the attention of, among others, anthropologists, biblical scholars, classicists, folklorists, missionaries, ophthalmologists, psychiatrists and sociologists, and in this book an attempt has been made to select essays representing the variety of approaches. Among the essays reprinted here are "The Evil Eye Among the Hebrews" by Aaron Bray (reprinted from *Ophthalmology*, 5, 1968), "The Evil Eye and Infant Health in Lebanon" by Jamal Karam Harfouche, "The Evil Eye in Some Greek Villages of the Upper Halkidiki Valley in West Macedonia" by Margaret M. Hardie, "The Evil Eye: The Breath: Defending the Evil Eye" by Thomas Dundes and "The Evil Eye: History and Creed Among the Palidars of Central Gujarat" by D. P. Pocock.

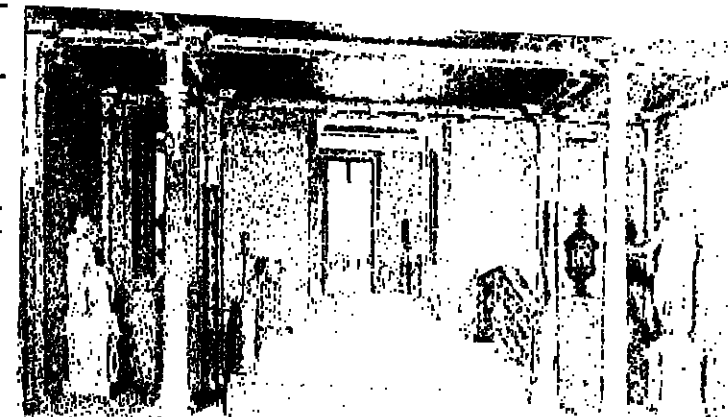
## Chez Cavendish

James Lees-Milne

THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE  
The House: A Portrait of Chatsworth  
232pp. Macmillan. £9.95.  
0 353 28455 0

In size, grandeur and wealth of treasures Chatsworth is a palace, but the owners disclaim this description. To them Chatsworth is a living home. It is always called by those who live and work in and around it, "the house". It is fitting therefore that the Duchess of Devonshire calls her book *The House: A Portrait of Chatsworth*. A portrait is what the book is, not an architectural historian's treatise but an extremely lively, entertaining and instructive record by a chatelaine, who happens also to be a Mitford. Wit therefore sparkles from every page. The reader should be warned not to be taken in by the author's disavowals of historical knowledge, literary ability and even taste. She is of course possessed of all three to a marked degree. Beware too of her vaunted prejudices of which the first is to be encountered in a quotation from Thomas Hobbes on the title-page: "Reading is a pernicious habit. It destroys all originality of sentiment." Others abound. *Visde* her description of a Samuel Palmer water-colour: "Morning is dangerously sunny and shows a woman with a pot on her head, a sure sign of 'abroad', which I don't like." These, earnest reader, are teasers.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One embarks upon a succinct history of each Cavendish owner. After the formidable Bess of Hardwick, who began building the original Chatsworth in 1552, few of her



The North Entrance Hall of Chatsworth in 1827 as painted in a water-colour by William Hunt (1790-1864), reproduced in the book reviewed here. The Sixth Duke of Devonshire wrote: "The two ancient statues, Domitian and Agrippina, are from the hall at Wansstead. The gilt leaves, vases... hinder people from tumbling through the openings from the corridor."

Cavendish descendants matched her in personality. The Fourth Earl and First Duke of Devonshire, who rebuilt Bess's house in William III's reign was undoubtedly a personage of consequence: he helped chase James II from the throne and was instrumental in bringing about the Whig Revolution. But his character does not emerge very sharply. The Fifth Duke, who lived with two women at the same time, his first wife the delicious Georgiana Spencer, and his second, Lady Elizabeth Foster, was remarkable for the peculiar trait of apathy which distinguished some of his successors. None more so than the Eighth Duke, "Uncle Cav [who] preferred sleeping to anything else", actually yawning while making his maiden speech in the House of Lords

and, having invited King Edward VII to dinner, forgot, and was found snoring in his club. His heir, the Ninth Duke, was scarcely less lethargic. He was also plain. Two farmers walking down the platform of Newcastle station observed him asleep in his compartment. "That's a fine Large White," one said. "That's no Large White," answered the Duke of Devonshire. His wife, Evelyn Duchess, dissociating herself from Edwardian society, of which she was disapproved, devoted her life to the care of the Cavendish houses, Chatsworth, Bolton Abbey, Compton Place, Hardwick Hall, Lismore, Chiswick House ("we sometimes used it for breakfast") and Devonshire House. She loved the society of

museum directors and became an expert needlewoman and repairer of fabrics. Her irreverent granddaughter-in-law tells how "her sensitive nose could smell dry rot a mile away, and she waged a private war against woodworm. Her plan was to give them concussion, and for this purpose she kept a little hammer in her bag to bang the furniture where they lurked."

Part One continues with an account of the household between the two Wars when conditions had not altered appreciably since the heyday of the Cavendish fortunes. The number of gardeners was, it is true, reduced from eighty to forty but there was still an army of indoor servants. These included, besides the usual high-ups, valets and ladies'-maids, two sixth-form housemaids, a laundry porter, stium boiler attendant, two window cleaners and two scrubbing women. Part One gives a horrifying account of the 80% cost-cutting incurred on the death of the Tenth Duke and the phillistine spoliation by the Treasury of the Cavendish collections in 1950. It ends with the arduous struggles of the present Duke and Duchess, after the family's return to Chatsworth in the 1950s, and a description of the living conditions of today on a comparative shoe-string, the family in residence and the visitors trooping round the state rooms and gardens in hundreds of thousands. It is hard to tell which the Duchess enjoys more, her private or public life at Chatsworth: into both she throws herself with zest and cheerful abandon.

Part Two of the book, entitled "A Tour of the House", consists of well chosen extracts from the *Handbook of Chatsworth*, addressed to his sister Harriet, Lady Granville, and privately printed by the Sixth Duke of Devonshire in 1844, with additional comments on the same rooms as they are today by the present Duchess. The Bachelors' Duke, known as Hart to his family, the son of the Fifth Duke and Georgiana, brought up in the famous Devonshire House set and the patron of Paxton, must have been a man of infinite charm. The Duchess is clearly as devoted to him as he doubtless would have been to her had he only known her. Their way of looking at things and their sense of the ludicrous are so alike that often in reading the Sixth Duke's text (here printed in italics) one thinks one is reading the Duchess's comments (in Roman type). For example, the Sixth Duke describes the rookery fence in the Blue Drawing Room, a delicious fantasy, of brass figures balancing on a bar as looking "as if it were listening to Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*", and the Great Dining-Room with its coffered ceiling as being rather too compact; "it is like dining in a great trunk, and you expect the lid to open". Both too share a deep love of this historic and splendid house set in an idyllic park in which, as the Duchess says, "there is not an ugly thing to be seen".

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## Jonathan Cape

## commentary

### Old English attitudes

Kevin Crossley-Holland

Beowulf  
Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith

The epic *Beowulf* has both narrative thrust and a great deal of subtle scoring. Not only is it an account of how a fifth-century hero fought single-handed against two appalling monsters and a shirking dragon; it is also a critical account of the poet's own Anglo-Saxon society, its beliefs and values, strengths and susceptibilities. It recreates for us a whole culture, the roots from which we ultimately derive.

In his one-man show first seen in Bristol and destined for the Edinburgh Festival, Julian Glover has assembled a composite version of the poem, perhaps just under half the length of the 3182-line original, based largely on the translations by Michael Alexander and Edwin Morgan. It lacks nothing in dramatic action and momentum; what is lost, inevitably, is much of the ruminative and allusive side of the poem, the poet's concern to anchor Beowulf's fantastic adventures in a detailed social context and mull over the meaning of life: much of what, in fact, makes it not just a great story but also a great poem.

While one may rue the speed with which certain incidents are passed over (such as the deeply moving conversation between Beowulf and the old Danish king Hrothgar) and regret the loss of dimension caused by the exclusion of the digressions; and while one may raise an eyebrow at some matters of interpretation (unlike the Anglo-Saxons, Mr Glover appears to deprecate the idea of a "boasting speech"), there is no doubt that the script really does manage to be both aristocratic and immediate, and it is rich in felicitous, Grendel is progenitor of "kobolds and gnomes, lemons and zombies" (pagan), the twelve sorrowful warriors riding round Beowulf's barrow "raised his name" (Alexander), and an awful

interpolation lifted from "The Wanderer" endorses the sense of time passing between Beowulf's youthful exploits and old age.

Mr Glover is a manly storyteller. Disdaining sound effects, backed by a mere handful of props, and backed by a blow-up of a Lindisfarne tombstone portraying Vikings brandishing sword, shield and scramasax (the subject of some dramatic lighting effects), he speaks from the first with the air of one who is entirely confident in his material and naturally expects his audience to become absorbed in it. His characterization of the principal characters is always deft, his illustrative gestures economical, and his relationship to *Beowulf* is nicely defined by the conspiratorial chuckle with which he rounds off the thrilling passages where Beowulf fights the two monsters, as if to say, look at what Beowulf did, and just look at what words can do!

The use of small nuggets of Old English to underline key moments and observations is a particularly successful device. So, when the Geats have settled for the night and all but Beowulf are asleep, "Com on wære Beowulf æt middre niht, and he ðær sæcgað" (Come on, wære Beowulf at mid-night, and he there seeks), "Wyrd oft nereth / unfægne corð thonne his ellen deað!" (Muscular, musical and beautifully declaimed, the Old English lends its own gravitas to the proceedings and makes it more easy to travel the long path from the roccoco absurdities of the Lyric to the rough splendour of the feasting-hall Heorot).

Restraint is the hallmark of Mr Glover's potent and well-tempered performance. As sparing in his use of Old English quotation as in his characterization and movement, he is always alert to the danger of melodrama. He gives the words room to work their own magic. Like a true scop, he is not interested in projecting his own personality any more than is strictly necessary to inveigle us into a harsh and splendid and compelling world.

### A playful apocalypse

Richard Combs

Rollover  
Warner West End Cinema

After the ignominious failure of Lindsay Anderson's *Britannia Hospital* to deliver a plausible or even amusing scenario for doom, *Rollover* constitutes a witty, ironic and stylish essay on the same subject. The end of the world here is gestating not in the halls of healing but in the chambers of commerce—the trading centres of New York banks where what one high priest refers to as the irresistible, the preordained workings of capital are monitored by the faithful. To start with, this means that the film can forget about the hand-me-down symbolism of Anderson's title and get on with a plot of financial skulduggery that is effectively apocalyptic: the natural flow of currency finally bursts its banks and a round-up of television coverage shows the world being washed away in the flood. *Rollover* does end with a symbolic wallop, though the imagery is more playful than portentous. In one of the trading rooms, all the stock market consoles have been put under wraps like so many coffins, and in the darkness the Last Romantic Couple contemplate the future and the possibilities of partnership.

Rolling over, it turns out, is a financial term. When a large depositor fails to "rollover", he redeposits, a short-term account, the bank in question has to return in question is a Saudi Arabian oil conglomerate, the is tantamount to liquidation. Hubbell Smith (Kris Kristofferson), a young, hot-shot banker, has been called in to look into the problems at Borough National Bank, whose instability has been causing flutters in the stock market. Hub braves out a temporary crisis at Borough National when it seems the Saudis aren't going to rollover, and in the meantime is trying to put some

change in the coffers by negotiating a large loan for a petrochemical company, Lee Winters (Jane Fonda), ex-film star and widow of the company's recently murdered president, is eager to expand, and liaisons, fiscal and sexual, are soon established. There is a connection, however, between Mr Winters' death and the mysterious behaviour of the Saudis. And the game finally collapses when Lee, not really trusting her lover as a partner, tries to go it alone against those powerful oil interests.

The mechanics which then bring everybody's world crashing down, though satisfying in thriller terms, are probably too simple in economic ones to cause an immediate run on the banks. In this respect, *Rollover* is the latest in a series of "problem" films (*Coming Home*, *The China Syndrome*) from Jane Fonda's IPC company, whose avowedly liberal crusades often work in a broad populist vein that is politically indeterminate, even implicitly conservative. The blame for rocking the world's economic boat is here laid squarely on the Saudis, who have unfairly mined all that wealth from the earth. What is fascinating about *Rollover*, however, is that just when it seems about to become a simple-minded tract it turns into an ironic, multi-layered fantasy. Largely, one suspects, because director Alan J. Pakula has refused to respect his characters as mouth-pieces and treats them instead as pawns in a game whose rules they have not properly understood—and as actors, in effect, whose roles have as much to do with other, older movies as with the burning issues of today.

Pakula has the most fun in this way with Jane Fonda—that model of the New Woman here playing the kind of glamorous, Elizabeth Taylorish celebrity she has sternly resisted becoming herself. While Lee Winters struggles in a man's world to become chairperson of the board, Pakula directs and dresses her as if her real context were some 1950s melodrama. Similarly, the streamlined, square-jawed, whizz-kid played by Kristofferson is constantly treated as if he had ridden out of the Old West—a heroic archetype who is going to find it hard to survive in the trading room. That both he and Mrs Winters do survive is testament to our faith in romantic fictions—something which Pakula, having it both ways, slyly acknowledges while managing to end his film on an uplifting note. He doesn't quite get away with everything, since his self-conscious treatment of his two stars prevents their striking any genuine romantic sparks together. *Rollover* is full of kind of intellectual neat, not least in the way Pakula surrounds his paranoid plot with a maze of references to his own paranoia movies. *The Parallax View* similarly reflected on the American Hero, and *All the President's Men* filled a real-life conspiracy with imaginary shadows.

from the Actress the inevitable, unexplained, "You don't give a damn about people..." Yet, as the Beacon of Knowledge, calculus in hand, steps from his room, leaving her with her morose (if not unattractive) husband, a look of real desolation crosses her face.

Each member of the excellent cast conveys a loneliness which is no respecter of IQs. Judy Davis is particularly fine as the Actress who, knowing full well the difference between the image and reality of the Great Body she presents to the world, is baffled at the same discrepancy in the Great Mind. Ian McDiarmid reciprocates as the Professor who, while never losing dignity (even with his trousers off), somehow progressively loses tangibility and almost totally evaporates when he confesses that his calculations on the Shape of the Universe have not only been completed but destroyed and begun again four times—have become instead not an illumination of significance but a private fixation, a solipsism.

Like the universe, the play has a vexed, elusive shape. One problem, with tackling Einstein, named or not, is that you not only take on Relativity. The Shape of the Universe, but, inevitably, "The Bomb" as well. Incorporating all three without strain is hard. It leads, in this case, to a Big Bang at the end, which jolts the audience, but proves to be only a figment of the audience's imagination, which the Actress gaily releases her script for the day. (All things are relative, even that.) This is a *coup de théâtre* which though seemingly scary, doesn't quite come off. The real energy of this commendable play is in its humour, sharpness and humanity, not the final explosion.

## THE ANARCHISTS' CASAS VIEJAS

Jerome Mintz  
"A triumphant validation of 'real history'... At last we know what really happened in Casas Viejas despite all the narrow, biased, and violent aftermath. In the end, it was written about it at the time and subsequently... a highly readable book... I was fascinated and moved by it." —Julian Pitt-Rivers.  
The uprising in Casas Viejas—a classic example of anarchist rural rebellion—was one of the stepping stones to the Spanish Civil War. Many attempts have been made to analyze the organization and leadership of the uprising, but the movement in which these rural workers and peasants were swept up, but not



## commentary

### Humane geometry

John Newman

Sir Christopher Wren  
Whitechapel Art Gallery

The 350th anniversary of the birth of Sir Christopher Wren, which falls this year, seems likely to smooth out a curious distortion which has developed in the evaluation of English architecture. Kerry Downes and J. A. Bennett have put together an illuminating exhibition (which can be seen until September 26) and both are to bring out major books later this year, one on Wren's architecture, the other on Wren's mathematical science.

For the last thirty years or so there has been a tendency to pass Wren over with conventional praise such as a great man deserves, but without especial enthusiasm. C. R. Cockerell, the last great exponent of classical architecture in Britain before the Victorian era broke the tradition, felt no such reservation, and it is good to see in the exhibition Cockerell's watercolour, the so-called "Professor's Dream", in which he depicts a vision of Wren's buildings together in one grand bird's-eye view. Likewise the Edwardian classicists at the beginning of the present century turned for inspiration again and again to Wren (or what they thought was Wren). One result of this admiration was the series of twenty volumes published by The Wren Society between 1924 and 1943 which constitute the foundation of modern studies of the architect.

Why has Wren's reputation dipped in recent times? First came Sir John Summerson's iconoclastic essay of 1936, republished in 1949 under the title "The Tyranny of Intellect" in his much read volume *Heavenly Mansions*. Summerson condemned Wren's architecture for an excess of the Lockean intellectualism which stifled visual and emotional creativity. Soon afterwards Nicholas Hawksmoor, Wren's chief assistant, was presented as an architect in his own right, and one of power and originality. The reassessment of Hawksmoor ran along with renewed interest in Vanbrugh, the other star of English Baroque; and to the Brutalists of the 1960s nothing of Britain's architectural past felt so congenial as the massive and seemingly military vigour of Blenheim Palace and Hawksmoor's East End churches. The historian whose researches underpinned this enthusiasm for English Baroque was Kerry Downes, with his monograph on Hawksmoor (1939), his survey of English Baroque (1966) and finally in 1978 his monograph on Vanbrugh.

All this left Wren looking rather faded, and more specifically in an odd no man's land between the classicism of Inigo Jones and the Baroque of Hawksmoor and Vanbrugh. It became fashionable to see Wren as neither

properly classical nor properly Baroque, or equally awkwardly as an amalgam of the two; and these barren and essentially unhistorical interpretations led to the conclusion that Wren had somehow been a failure, and Summerson's judgement seemed to be confirmed. So now it is most welcome that Professor Downes, having contributed, however unintentionally, to the devaluation of Wren, has in due course turned his sharp eye, good sense and thorough

Mary le Bow and St Augustine Watling Street demonstrate. Even the topic discussed by Professor Downes, Wren's freedom with entablatures, showed the way to Vanbrugh, whose monumental Composite piers in the hall at Castle Howard carry a deep and richly decorated entablature which has no architect to it at all. But Wren never eliminated the architrave, which after all represents the bearing lintel, at the point of support above a capital. Wren held firm to the structural sense



Robert Trevitt's engraving of St Paul's from the north-west, showing clearly the hard edge with which the building ended before the balustrades were added, an embellishment contrary to Wren's wishes. From the exhibition reviewed here, and reproduced in its catalogue (by Kerry Downes and J. A. Bennett, 90pp. The Whitechapel Art Gallery / Trefoll Books Ltd. £6; £4 during exhibition. 0 85294 030 3.)

scholarship on to Wren himself. Dr Bennett's small but fascinating section on Wren the man of science is an essential element in the exhibition, but it is with Wren the architect that it primarily deals.

The catalogue of the exhibition is prefaced by two essays in which Professor Downes first re-examines Wren's aesthetic theory in the light of seventeenth-century thought, particularly by means of an imaginative comparison with Poussin, and then takes two particular features of Wren's architectural style, his design of windows and his handling of the classical entablature, to show that he was both more firmly rooted in native English tradition and more prepared to bend and break the classical "rules" of architecture than has hitherto been appreciated.

On this view the English Baroque of Hawksmoor and Vanbrugh is seen to be a magnification or exaggeration of ideas already present in Wren's architecture. The exhibition itself makes the point in a number of ways, for several drawings here show motifs or approaches to design in Wren's work which later became characteristic of English Baroque architects. For example Hawksmoor's cutting back of the wall-surface in layers at the Clarendon Building in Oxford is developed from Wren's handling of the river front of Trinity College Library, Cambridge; the portico with a semicircle cut out of the bottom of the pediment, used by Hawksmoor so dramatically, even shockingly, at St Alphege, Greenwich, and Christ Church, Springfield, turns out to have been invented by Wren back in 1672, for the unexecuted north portico of St Stephen Walbrook. The notorious tendency for Vanbrugh's Blenheim to become higher and more elaborate as the design developed is again foreshadowed in Wren, as the drawings on show for the steeples of St

one of the group of drawings rediscovered in 1951 and never before seen by the public.

The pavement design brings out dramatically what is also perfectly clear from the various engraved views of the interior of the cathedral, that (apart from the morning prayer chapel at the west end) the choir was the only part of the building used, or intended, for worship. The interior of the nave and transepts, focused on the space under the dome, formed nothing more than a magnificent area for promenading, a more decorous successor to "Paul's Walk" in the pre-Fire cathedral. So four-fifths of Wren's building was there for the sake of magnificence, as a symbol of the prestige of the Church of England (appropriately enough, since the Cathedral was paid for from a tax on coal coming into the Port of London), and not for any liturgical or other practical purpose. It had been thus in the Great Model, and in its precursor, the Greek Cross design, Edward Woodroffe's plan for which shows the diminutive area proposed for the clergy's stalls as compared with the total floor space.

Of all Wren's buildings St Paul's Cathedral is the outstanding example of development upwards during the process of design. The outer walls of the Warrant Design, authorized for the start of construction in May 1675, Wren decided before laying the foundations to double in height; the western towers were in the end built taller and more complex than originally designed. Only for the dome itself did Wren from the very beginning have an adequate vision: the pure and lofty cupola set on a ring of columns and riding high above the body of the cathedral is the same, though much improved in profile and modelling, as the pre-Fire design made more than forty years earlier. It was the problems of statics and engineering which took time to be solved; the precise form of the hidden brick cone on which the lantern and the outer shell of the dome depend seems to have been a matter of hesitation until a very late stage.

Summerson's verdict on St Paul's still holds good: "the ultimate grandeur of the whole, as a sheer monument of intellectual self-reliance, is beyond all criticism or praise", but this exhibition makes it possible to buttress that respect with a greatly enhanced understanding. In the first room hang portraits by Verrio, Closterman and Kneller. In all of them Wren's pride in his great cathedral is apparent. Most telling is Kneller's, painted in 1711; the year after St Paul's was formally finished; in it Wren has unrolled beside him a plan of the cathedral which is a weighted down on the table by the volume of Euclid. Wren had come to architecture after showing brilliant promise as a mathematician; and at the end of his life he wants us to remember that architecture, both structurally and as he believed, aesthetically, depended on geometry.

*The Work of Christopher Wren* by Geoffrey Beard. (240pp. John Bartholomew and Son Ltd. £14.95. 0 7028 8071 X) has recently been published to coincide with Wren's 350th anniversary celebrations. It opens with a succinct survey of Wren's career: his early life (spent, significantly, at Windsor, where his father was Dean); his going to Oxford, at that time seat of the Royalist Cause; his first architectural commissions for Pembroke College, Cambridge and the Sheldonian Theatre; and then his work in London in the aftermath of the Great Fire, and at Whitehall, Greenwich, Chelsea, Hampton Court and Winchester for the Crown. There follows an excellent set of 207 plates (thirty-two in colour), by A. F. Kersting, juxtaposing plans, contemporary engravings and plans of buildings which influenced Wren with photographs of the completed structures, as well as drawings for uncompleted or now destroyed buildings.

### New Oxford books: History

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Edited by Marjorie Chibnall

The English estates of the Abbey of Holy Trinity, Caen, included manors situated in Gloucestershire, Cotswolds, East Anglia, and Wiltshire. This volume contains surveys for the whole estate made in the reigns of Henry I and Henry II, thirteenth-century customs for Minchinhampton, Avening, and Feistad, and twenty-six charters and leases, some of which relate to property in London. £12.50 British Academy

#### In the Shadow of Florence

Provincial Society in Renaissance Pesce

Judith C. Brown

By analyzing changes in the size and structure of population, in the economic life, and in the public administration of Pesce, the author explores what happened to this ordinary Tuscan town after Florence, its powerful and rich neighbour, conquered it in the fourteenth century. £19.50

#### Oxford University Press







Peter Redgrove

G. WILSON KNIGHT

Symbol of Man: On Body-Soul for Stage and Studio  
201pp. Washington: University Press of America.  
0191 1589 4

This book offers an introductory synthesis between acting, yoga, Feldenkrais relaxation, the Delsarte "System of Expression", Rudolf Steiner's eurythmy and some other systems of "personal development". It works towards a body-language of dramatic expression that would be at the same time eloquent, exactly intelligible and deeply felt on the physical level that must be the basis for any truly meaningful theatre. This would be partly a rediscovery of the kind of theatrical language the Elizabethans had, which was not by any means solely spoken language, but a vocabulary of expressive emblems and gestures made by the whole body. Drama of this sort, in G. Wilson Knight's view, opens up very deep levels of feeling to theatrical expression. As we all possess physical bodies, it is a common language of feeling in the body-neglecting (if not body-hating) Western cultures such an exploration has been inwardly feared and is long overdue, and if accomplished it would return dramatic art to its true function, which is the development as well as the expression of a complete humanity.

An entire overhauling of the actor's technique is needed, especially in this age of jerky sitcom "realism". As I read him, Professor Wilson Knight is writing against both illusionism in drama, and its purported cure, the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*. I think he sees these alternatives as dead herrings, that would not have diverted theatre from its proper function if drama had been rooted in body-language. Drama is constructed so that it proceeds from misadjustment towards realization and resolution, through a series of turning-points. Wilson Knight's thesis suggests that these moments of focus are in the nature of epiphanies or showings. What in a bad actor will be the striking of an attitude, will, in a good one who follows Wilson Knight's principles (or, as I believe, in any very good actor by instinct), be the sudden descent of a universal image, given by the expression of the body, and the manner in which its energies are allowed visibly to flow. It is the moment in which the "overself" is expressed, a moment of greater understanding or communication than can be achieved ordinarily by any of the characters in *propria persona* within the mundane level of the drama.

Anybody who has watched yoga knows how commanding the assumption of a correct posture of dynamic balance can be. Indian temple sculpture is immediately present, in its timeless comment on the human condition, and its striving towards a perfection which seems at that moment just possible. Then the spectator may embark enthusiastically on "the training, and find it not so simple. So in a way actor, or like costumed by the casual throwaway theatre of the small screen, force hangs about in the actor's body, it does not pervade it in a direct expression. "Man has, in effect, been reduced on every level to heads and hands sticking out of clothes. The simple truth is that we have regarded the body as evil; and, as a result, have no real intuition of soul." Actors find their employment in the sitcoms, which seem to be about heads and hands and not taking off clothes, principally.

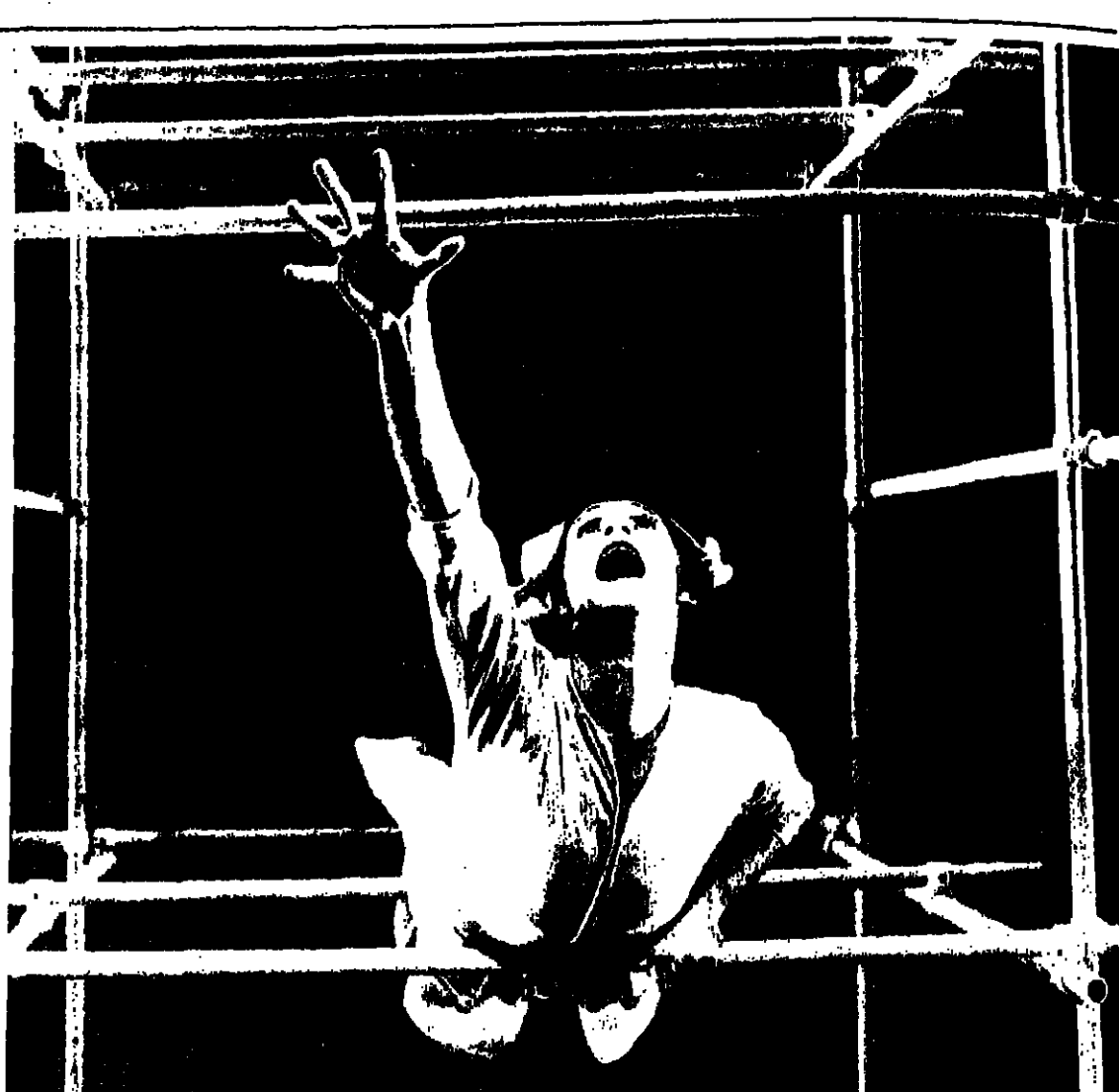
Wilson Knight's argument takes us into areas which are easily mocked by the shallowly extrovert "realist". He doesn't recoil from using terms like "ethereal body" or "high-old wisdom". He must be read closely here. Then it becomes clear that he is not speaking of occulted secrets at all. The secret wisdom is what everybody knows, and it is secret because it is physical, or rather, belongs to that side of mind which is body. Our culture likes to reason about dead matter. Wilson Knight reminds us about the title of John Stewart Collis's book on the body: *Living with a Stranger*.

It is a question of rediscovery as well as technique. How do other parts of the body than the face return how to be expressive? In the Age of the Close-Up? Wilson Knight points out that even clothes in drama can act as "visible auris", communicating profound emotional effects. The actor must wear them, though, not vice versa. They must be transmitters of the body's broadcasts, or expressive masks, not passive decorations. There is an affinity between richly spoken language and the unclothed body. Steiner speaks of the complete human form as a spoken word, and notes the specifically sexual element in the voice, and is quoted by Wilson Knight in this regard as good speaking is rather like revealing one's body. "These rich tones are projections of one's soul, or etheric (or astral) body; and so is one's physique." Again, one must not be put off by such terms as "astral" or "etheric" body if one is to follow the argument, which is all about how ordinary language will not do for extraordinary but natural events. "Dramatic culture is the unification of all the avenues of expression... uniting them in one grand combination... in which body, voice and mind speak in perfect harmony and unison with the ideal image of the soul behind them." This is Genevieve Stebbins, on Delsarte, quoted in this book.

The strategy is an interesting one, and moving. In 1950 Wilson Knight asked the photographer Basil Green to make studies of him in a series of postures which he felt to be among those which in his practical dramatic work had summarized or incarnated some nodal or pivotal point. These photographs, not very well reproduced, illustrate the discussion. Among them are symbolic attitudes expressed by Richard III, Romeo (who might also play Hamlet), Othello, Macbeth, Lear (or Timon), Puck (or Caliban), Ariel. There are "The Nietzschean Pose", "The Dramatic Challenge", "Seraphic Grace", "The Walk: Kundalini", "Resurrection", "Kinetic Instant", "The Instrument". Wilson Knight puts forward no high claims for the visual studies, though he would like any artistic merit they may have to be taken into consideration, but sees them as a kind of laboratory investigation. "It has been found that pictures with definite faults may be, under analysis, among the most interesting... so each of them is accompanied by analysis, the scope of which I have indicated."

A favourite of mine is "The Walk: Kundalini", probably because from my own yoga practice (in the Delsarte system) I can recognize the accuracy of Wilson Knight's remarks. Kundalini is the Hindu image of the serpentine spine. If it is rhythmically alive and conscious as a person moves, then its action transmits and unifies energy throughout the body. There is a whole system of kundalini yoga elaborating this notion in symbolic terms. Wilson Knight's discussion ranges usefully through European descriptions of the same phenomenon, so what seemed esoteric now becomes obvious. He touches on the Steiner and Delsarte teaching of the spine, of Dr. H. Lawrence's stress on the two back ganglia as centres of power and will, on the therapeutic results of the Alexander method of posture control, Feldenkrais on "proper walking" and Jean-Louis Barrault, for whom "the walk becomes music... thus my body writes a silent sentence in space" every gesture originates in the spinal column... It is this continual awareness of their place of origin that gives the mime's gestures their style, made dimension, and... In the theatre, Human Being struggles in space. And what song springs up? A life seen essentially from the angle of its Presence, in motion... its underlying rhythm... And on this so fine edge the infinite simultaneity of all the conflicts in Presence. Exchanges, harmonies, ensembles, attractions, refusals, pretences, observations, getting of accounts... So at rehearsal a whole plastic language should be minutely worked out... a secret, subconscious and subterranean "revolution" of the action.

Each of the discussions is as rich in suggestion, and in the new discovery of a dramatic discipline as to us, a new freedom.



Christopher Bruce in Ballet Rambert's *Pierrot Lunaire*, choreographed by Glen Tetley to Schoenberg's music; one of nearly 100 photographs in Anthony Crickmay's *Dancers* (Collins, £30, 0 00 216291 1) a lavish publication covering highlights of the last two decades in the art of dance and in that of its foremost photographer.

## Wars of succession

Richard Buckle

KATHRINE SORLEY WALKER

*De Basil's Ballets Russes*  
317pp. Hutchinson. £12.95.  
0 09 147510 4

JACK ANDERSON

*The One and Only: The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo*  
333pp. Dance Books. £9.95.  
0 903102 65 X

The politics of the ballet world after the death of Diaghilev in 1929 were as complicated as those of the Romanov empire after the murder of Julius Caesar. That is perhaps one reason why no one has attempted to write in detail about this period before. Arnold Haskell described it at the time - and indeed I read his *Balletomania* (1934) before I ever saw a ballet - but the two books under discussion here are the first to provide a factual account, month by month, year by year, of what happened to two important "Russian" companies in the 1930s and later.

It is a very exhausting story. First there was René Blum, who engaged Diaghilev's lieutenant Boris Kochno, his last choreographer Serge Grigorov on behalf of the Monte Carlo theatre. Balanchine discovered the three much publicized "balletinas" in the Russian dance schools of Paris. Then the ambitious Vasili Vokresensky, who called himself Colonel de Basil, convinced to oust Blum from the command of his own company; he replaced Balanchine by Massine and aimed at attracting a wider public with popular programmes, made up largely of old favourites from the Diaghilev repertoire. De Basil was in charge by London in July 1933. During that year Balanchine, Kochno and Tournon were briefly working for Edward James's *Les Ballets 1933*, which was as short-lived as its name foretold. Blum started up again, calling his new company *Les Ballets de Monte Carlo*, Massine quarrelled with de Basil and started up again, calling his new company *Les Ballets de Monte Carlo*, Massine quarrelled with de Basil and started up again, calling his new company *Les Ballets de Monte Carlo*.

Each of the discussions is as rich in suggestion, and in the new discovery of a dramatic discipline as to us, a new freedom.

Monte Carlo, directed by Serge Denham (an American), Massine (who had left de Basil) and, rather vaguely, René Blum, at Drury Lane. Baronova shone to the west of the street in competition with Danilova, Markova and Tournanova to the east.

Meanwhile, under Rambert and de Valois British ballet had been born; and Lincoln Kirstein had persuaded Balanchine to open (in 1934) a New York school with the faint hope of one day establishing a native ballet company in the United States.

The story of these battles, rebellions and triumphs is far more involved even than I have suggested; and to have sorted it all out and got it down on paper has been for each of our authors a remarkable labour of love. Neither book is easy reading; both are indispensable to libraries.

In *De Basil's Ballets Russes* Kathrine Sorley Walker chronicles the company associated with the Colonel from 1931 until, under the name of Original Ballet Russe, it retired soon after his death in 1951. In *The One and Only: The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo* Jack Anderson records the metamorphoses of the once "Blum company" when it was taken over by Denham, its "Massine years", its "Balanchine years" and its gradual Americanization. (Blum was murdered by Hitler.) English readers will learn from each book more about the wartime and post-war years of each company than they ever knew before, and will probably be surprised to be reminded that "The One and Only" (which staged *Agnes de Mille's* pioneering *Rodeo* in 1942) continued until 1962. Mr Anderson got hooked on the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in Milwaukee in 1950, just as I had got hooked on the de Basil Ballet in London nearly twenty years before.

During the years immediately preceding the Second World War many English ballet enthusiasts like myself, born too late to see the Diaghilev company, had their eyes opened to the ballet possibilities of America as an art. I then saw for the first time such Diaghilev works as Fokine's *Les Sylphides*, *Carnaval*, *Scheherazade*, *Petrushka*, *L'Opéra de Feu* and the Polytechnic Dances from *Prince Igor*; Massine's *Le Tricorne* and *La Boutique fantasque*; and Balanchine's *La Fils prodigue*. I admitted newly commissioned ballets

such as Balanchine's *Collon*, Fokine's *L'Epreuve d'Amour* and Massine's *Symphonies*. I was dazzled not only by blonde Baronova and dark, lustrous Tournanova, but by celebrated artists of Diaghilev's days, such as Tchernicheva, Nentichinova, Danilova, Markova, Massine and Woizickovsky. It was the most exciting education.

Kathrine Sorley Walker quotes Ernest Newman on Massine's second "symphonic ballet", "the better we know our Brahms, the more pleasure we derive from *Chorearilum*"; but she pronounces no final verdict on the controversy which raged between those who applauded Massine's right to "interpret" a famous symphony and those who denied it. Newman, the king of Wagnerites, who had disliked all Diaghilev's productions in the 1920s and who scorned Stravinsky, came out in passionate support of Massine from the word "go". Now, Massine progressed boldly from Tchaikovsky's Fifth (*Les Présages*), to Brahms's Fourth (*Chorearilum*), to Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* and Beethoven's Seventh Symphony; and he attempted to devise a choreography which provided a literal parallel to the scores, sometimes note by note, and which in my view was not only unjustifiable but absurd. (Only the Berlioz symphony, with its undeniable programme, was defensible.) Yet Newman, the great music critic, fell for Massine's "much-praised programme, was defensible." Yet Newman, the great music critic, fell for Massine's "much-praised programme, was defensible." Yet Newman, the great music critic, fell for Massine's "much-praised programme, was defensible."

Miss Sorley Walker admits that "the particular value of the de Basil Ballet was as disseminator rather than creator", and Mr Anderson, whom I know to be an admirer of Balanchine, would probably admit, despite his happy youthful memories of "The One and Only", that it must be regarded chiefly as a forerunner of New York City Ballet. While de Basil's lost Denham carried the flag of empire - imaginary Russia and mythical Monte Carlo - to Australia, Mexico or across the United States from coast to coast, new kingdoms were slowly but surely being built on solid foundations. In London by Ninette de Valois, in New York by Lincoln Kirstein and Balanchine.

## Signs of improvement

Paul Slack

P. J. CORFIELD

*The Impact of English Towns: 1700-1800*  
266pp. Oxford University Press.  
£9.95 (paperback, £3.95).  
0 19 215830 9

Most people probably think of Georgian England as a rural society, ruled by squire and parson, fed by farmer and labourer, epitomized by the country-house and by the rustic scene in literature and painting. This, however, is to take the propaganda of part of the society for the reality of the whole; and to succumb to the romantic wishful-thinking of a post-industrial age. At the end of the eighteenth century England was visibly and certainly one of the two or three most heavily urbanized countries in the world. In 1700, 18 per cent of the population of England and Wales lived in towns. By 1750, 22 per cent did so, and by 1801 no less than 30 per cent. Although the urban population did not outnumber the rural population until 1851, the "take-off" to sustained urbanization had clearly happened before 1800.

Penelope Corfield's beautifully polished and admirably succinct book explains how this urban growth occurred, and what its effects were - both on the towns themselves and on the country as a whole. It is the sort of synthesis which any historian would be proud to have written. It summarizes modern research where it is overpoweringly plentiful, on subjects like urban building; and it breaks new ground where recent work has been scant - as on the urban family and the urban environment. Besides necessary tables and graphs, it contains many splendidly evocative quotations, which show that the author is that regrettably rare bird, a literate economic historian. Above all, it manages to achieve brevity without indulging in systematic oversimplification. It demonstrates how multifaceted and variegated, and hence how extensive in its repercussions, English urban life was.

Dr Corfield eschews any attempt to find a single cause for urbanization, for example. Like industrialization, it had many roots; and the two processes nourished each other in a great many ways. Some of the towns which grew

most rapidly in the eighteenth century were centres of manufacturing industry: Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield. Some were ports, benefiting from and fertilizing the expansion of overseas trade: Bristol, Liverpool, Hull. Others were spas and resorts like Bath, which reflected and channelled new consumer demand. As Dr Corfield says, the latter were "show-cases for the urban way of life and powerful propagandists for the consumer society". All these towns had one thing in common, however. They were not London. The capital English town, but it was not growing as quickly or as famously as its provincial juniors. England's urban world, like its economy, was becoming multicentred, and richer in the process.

It was not only "the Commerce of Towns" which, in Adam Smith's words, "contributed to the improvement of the Country". Even without parliamentary reform, English politics had a pronounced urban dimension. A host of private bills were pushed through Parliament by municipal interests. There were those famous borough constituencies with wide franchises which were notorious barometers of popular opinion. There was the ever-present pressure of the urban crowd. Urban society also had a profound influence on contemporary social perceptions and social habits. By the end of the century observation of towns had produced the vocabulary of class, and yeomen and gentry found their position as the backbone of the nation usurped by the urban middle class - "the middling, comfortable, modest and moderate, sober and satisfied, industrious and intelligent Classes", as one observer described them.

Not everyone took so rosy a view of urban manners, or welcomed the ways in which they undermined older notions of propriety, status and degree. Especially in the first half of the century, towns were often seen as centres of noise and disorder, places full of a "constant Babel-like uproar" and of "Babylonian confusion". But even their critics testified to their impact. The bishop of Chester, kicking desperately against the pricks, found spectacular and insidious dangers in Manchester and Macclesfield: "Intemperance and licentiousness of manners; a wanton and foolish extravagance in dress, in equipage, in houses, in furniture, in entertainment;

a passion for luxurious indulgences and frivolous amusements; a gay, thoughtless indifference about a future life." Here was the social tone of Georgian England, firmly set in, and by, an urban environment.

By the end of the eighteenth century, however, what had once been seen as problems had become opportunities: for evangelism and moral reform, for urban improvement and municipal aggrandizement, as well as for profit and commercial exploitation. There were new churches and chapels alongside pubs and theatres. If poverty was a continuing problem, there were new streets of symmetrical houses with sash windows and occasional parapets, aping the country mansion. Even back-to-back houses gave the labouring classes the privacy of their own front-door. There were schemes for street cleaning and lighting, for water supplies and refuse collection. There is even some evidence that urban mortality rates marginally declined. According to one observer in London in 1771, "a general spirit prevails for correcting ancient errors and establishing new improvements".

Behind all this was a resurgence of municipal pride and self-confidence which had been largely in retreat since the late Middle Ages. Dr Johnson might sneer at the "boobies of Birmingham" who worked with their hands; his native Lichfield, by contrast, was a "city of philosophers" working with their heads. But the boobies were beginning to take a different view, to congratulate themselves on their unique qualities and to claim in addition the virtues which were prized by society at large. "When the word Birmingham occurs", one of them wrote in 1781, "a superb picture instantly expands in the mind, which is best explained by the other words - grand, populous, extensive, active, commercial and humane."

Of course, the Babel of Babylon was never replaced by a new urban order, grand or humane. Blake's new Jerusalem was never built. Further industrialization and urban growth after the end of Dr Corfield's period brought new problems and closed off old opportunities. But what had definitely been created by 1800, as she so effectively shows, was that very English, and very urban, construct - the age of improvement.

## The rise of officialdom

R. T. Shannon

JILL PELLEW

*The Home Office 1848-1914: From Clerks to Bureaucrats*  
271pp. Heinemann. £12.50.  
0 435 62685 6

Jill Pellew, daughter of an academic bureaucrat and wife of a Foreign Office bureaucrat, offers this book "in commemoration of two hundred years of Home Office history". She has cunningly selected the seventy best years to write about. These are the "Trollopian" decades, when the grandeur of the State was established and when a "civil servant" was still correctly understood to be a civilian officer in the service of the Crown. More prosaically, Dr Pellew insists that the years from 1870 to 1896 were those in which can be observed the "most dramatic changes in terms of the ability of higher officials, and of office structure and work load". Her theme is how gentlemen who had to be clerks were transformed into bureaucrats who needed to be gentlemen.

Diplomatic history used to be jeered at as what one clerk wrote to another clerk. Administrative history is likewise vulnerable to the sneer that it is about how the clerks get their jobs and pensions. The rest of good administrative history (as of good diplomatic history) is indeed to get it right about the clerks, for the Weberian point about this book (as its title indicates) is that the clerks became very important in the modern state. The emphasis these days in

diplomatic history is not to jeer at the clerks but to denounce them as an insidiously dangerous mandarinism who manipulate politicians and cause wars. This book is about how the state administratively set about providing machinery to keep society in order. Sir Leon Radzinowicz, in a foreword, is blandly unapologetic. "The changes which took place in the organization and functioning of the Home Office during the Victorian period reflected the fundamental changes which at the time were reshaping the responsibilities of the State, extending gradually but substantially its frontiers of interference and control". Dr Pellew, he adds for brazen good measure, "makes it clear that the pace of accepted reforms, indeed their ultimate directions, frequently depended on the internal attitudes and forces of the department itself".

So indeed she does. Ostensibly this is a study of how the self-contained departmental structures of the old unreformed service, with its systems of recruitment by patronage, promotion by seniority and emoluments by fees and perquisites, were transformed into a liberal profession geared to an ethic of merit and trained expertise dedicated to an ideal of the public interest. Behind the thickets of detail that Dr Pellew will in due course "expand her solid investigations" to include the political history of the Home Office. She is a brave and worthy daughter of the regiment.

Those notions and that ideal were the great legacy of Victorian civil service reform. Dr Pellew presents them and it to us in a loyalty and winningly dispassionate mode. This is a book not only to be relished for its expertise by the general reader; it will be relished by its inwardness along the Home Office corridors (where, one hopes, informal cricket matches are still played in rare moments of relaxation or pressure). No wonder Sir Leon hopes that Dr Pellew will in due course "expand her solid investigations" to include the political history of the Home Office. She is a brave and worthy daughter of the regiment.

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## Deflations

William Scammell

GAVIN EWART

The New Ewart: Poems 1980-1982  
115pp. Hutchinson. £4.95.  
0 09 146981 3

MICHAEL FOLEY

The Go Situation  
52pp. Belfast: Blackstaff Press.  
£3.50.  
0 85640 263 X

Hot on the heels of *The Collected Ewart* (1980) comes *The New Ewart*, 115 pages long, containing 106 new poems. Gavin Ewart and Peter Redgrove must run each other very close in the numbers racket, if in no other respect. Reading Redgrove in any quantity is like being beaten to death with peacock feathers; reading Ewart is like being accosted by an erudite family solicitor who once got drunk with the Ancient Mariner.

As it turns out, age and ageing figure prominently in the book, together with those old favourites, sex, roasting the respectable, parody, and the contemporary conversation poem, by Fuller out of Auden. With the other, Coleridgean sort of conversation poem, Ewart has no truck. Yeats is castigated, in a poem called "The Doggerel of Life", for the daffy omissions and commissions in his *Oxford Book*, but it would be fruitless looking to this poet for a similar poem about Larkin's more recent compilation, which might be held to out-daff Yeats. Sonority, we are to understand, is the chief quality of the Wordsworthian-Yeatsian variety, is a public health hazard.

It's useful to remember, though, that Ewart's deflationary strategy (no bicycle-pumping the human heart) is as deliberately adopted as Yeats's stiffs or Larkin's bicycle-clips. "If you imagine life as a large room, most of the Exits are marked Painful", one poem begins ("Exits"). Consider those neo-Augustan capitals, which discreetly erect pillars and a large front door marked "Important" for the down-at-heel feelings to go in through. The poem ends:

Don't mourn them, like some stolid marble tomb,  
those who go out like a light - painful  
under, and they had tucked  
missed what we all would duck  
if we'd the choice; feeling filer and filer.  
Long live the instant killer!

Full marks for common sense, but I'm not sure that the confident, secular "we" is as binding as the poet asserts it to be, or indeed that the "slow darkness... lightning hysterics... Long illness" with which a quick death is contrasted are always and necessarily to be deplored. Proust? Denton Welch? Simone Weil? Plath? Keats? These counter-examples are offered merely to suggest that successful generalization (the instant killer for which nearly all poetry years) has to be grounded in a scrupulously thorough morphology.

Here the carping ends. There are many brilliant satirical and parodic pieces, including a hilarious send-up of John Cowper Powys ("A Glastonbury Cricket Match"), a witty appreciation of Emily Dickinson, a burlesque of Auden, and a plain-people-of-England resort to Nancy Mitford. And there's "Strange how Potent Chump Music is" a late twentieth-century reduction of Lorenzo's "The man who hath no music in himself... Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils..." in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Most people like a beat, the musical elite cannot deny Beethoven's cosmic thump - Stravinsky too (I guess) like rhythm more than less, and with their works the joint will really jump.

So, music (highbrow, low) like water let it flow!  
Strong feeling is remembered in these notes,  
a sad and sexy past made bitter-sweet at last; let Venus Polyhymnia have your votes. I like that silly "I guess", followed by the learned pun on the muse offered us in the last line. Other bullseyes are "The Late Eighties", "Conversation Piece", "Literary", "Residential", "The Meeting", and half a dozen more. Increasingly, Ewart is the gaiety of the nation. Long may he chuckle and rage - preferably in strict forms.

Michael Foley pays homage to Gavin Ewart in one of his poems, and admires (at a guess) the likes of James Simmonds, but he has neither the range of the one nor the sanity of the other. *The Go Situation* is a strange, sour book in which attitudes are struck on every page. Such tyros as Hughes and Larkin ("A frightened crows, slinky and dry Never living and now scared to die") are vauntingly dismissed, yet, amusingly, the few poems in this collection that begin to live, such as "On the Waterfront", are pure Larkin, both in spirit and in form.

## The will to survive

Neil Corcoran

TOM PAULIN

The Book of Juniper  
Drawings by Noel Connor  
Unnumbered pages. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books. £2.25.  
0 906427 16 0

Reviewing a book by Louis Simpson some time ago, Tom Paulin recommended the notion of the poem as "above all a chant, a rhythm, a cadence, not a heavy vehicle loaded with definite statements" and advocated "that sheer verbal playfulness which refuses to be guilty of meaning". On the face of it, such instances might seem to be at odds with the impression made by many of Paulin's own earlier poems, which will themselves outwards from such hermetic self-entrenchment and involved themselves in the necessities of civic responsibility, of anatomization and analysis. Some of these poems have, indeed, seemed to certain critics too willful altogether, too resolved and decided, too much a matter of "statement". But Paulin's last book, *The Strange Museum*, and particularly the poem, "The Other Voice", made it clear that his debate, between the will and the chant, between the public world of political accountability and the private, self-delighting satisfactions of the poem that serves "only the pure circle of itself", had become the focus of thematic attention. This new, beautifully produced little book, containing seven poems, including the lengthy title sequence, and accompanied by Noel Connor's responsive drawings, seems to mark a further stage in Paulin's argument with

himself, and to find a deeper way of adequately articulating a political view while remaining true to the promptings of the inner voice.

The strategies developed in the book render these poems more oblique and more extensive in implication than most of the earlier work. Even the relatively straightforward poem, "Desertmartin", elaborates the specific instance of a Northern Irish community where "the Word has withered to a few Parched certainties" in a comparison with "Masculine Islam" and its "theology of rifle-butts and executions"; both are "places where the spirit dies". Accompanied by Connor's grim drawing (which owes something, perhaps, to Leonard Baskin) of a fierce, two-headed bird of prey, each head facing the other in menacing, mad-eyed profile, the poem is, I think, one of the very best yet written about the North. Paulin's own sardonic stance - he is rendered "the owl of Minerva in a hired car" by his "powerless knowledge" - is also, though not so overtly, the stance that is taken in the other poems.

They are all, in different degrees, poems about the imprisonment of the spirit in cultural, and specifically in colonial, forms; but they consistently withhold definition or resolution and open instead into the allusive, the suggestive, the metaphorical, and the emblematic. This absence of the stability of achieved statement can be painfully funny, as in the two "Manichean Geography" poems, where the natives pray to "a signed photograph/Of His High Troop Majesty/The Duke of Edinburgh"; it can be almost transparently fluid and graceful, as it is in "Ceremony on the Border", where the women who prostrate "the aquat dog, Terminus" on what is presumably the Irish border,

seem almost Japanese in the dignified stateliness of their hopeless and appalling ritual; and it can even assume an almost dandified Stevensian flourish in "As a White Lodge in a Garden of Cucumbers", where the rich sexual delight of "a comedy of oil" baffles the staid "boreal teacher".

But the most significant poem in the book, and the one that surely most clearly points Paulin's way forward, is the title sequence itself. In its sixth section, Paulin refers, without actually naming him, to Mandelstam in his Voronezh exile and alludes to one of the *Tristia* poems. In it (No 118, "We shall meet again in Petersburg"), Mandelstam speaks, in a characteristic image of natural celebration, of the "flowers that will never die", and it seems clear that Paulin's juniper, like Fleener's "small-eyed survivor flowers/the pined-for, unmolested orchid" in "Triptych", belong to the same species. As a plant whose gymnosperm "wills its own survival" in desolate places, the juniper is placed at the centre of a series of religious, natural, historical and even culinary evocations which set it in wily opposition to "the warped politics of other trees". This extraordinarily inventive, singing poem culminates in a vision of Northern and Southern armies of juniper-carriers meeting to form

that sweet equal republic where the juniper talks to the oak, the thistle, the banded elm, and the jolly jolly chestnut.

This is a new and memorable way of talking about a united Ireland; it accepts and, I think, triumphantly overcomes as visionary poetry must, the risk of the ridiculous.

## The glories of gumleaves

Fleur Adcock

LES A. MURRAY

The Vernacular Republic: Poems 1961-1981  
219pp. Edinburgh: Canongate. £3.95.  
0 86241 023 3

Of the poets now writing in Australia Les A. Murray is probably the most Australian and probably also the best. The Australian bias in his subject-matter is, as he has said, "both natural and deliberate"; if his work strikes home, more critical commentators as redolent of gumleaves than pretend that this aroma is artificial. Murray grew up in a rural area of the New South Wales North Coast, where his Scottish ancestors were among the first white settlers. The atmosphere and mores of this locality are reflected in a number of his poems, such as the early "Noonday Axeman", with its recurring phrase "Axefall, echo and silence", and "Evening Alone at Bunyah", in which the poet revisits the shabby house where he grew up and, while his widowed father is out at a dance in the local hall, contemplates the past: "This country is my mind". He gives us glorious celebrations of that country, filled with radiant landscapes, generous food ("Pie spiced like islands, dissolving in cream"), farm-work and farm talk, exaggerated yards, and deadpan humorous asides. Violence also has its place here, with poems about killing (rabbit-trapping, a pig being butchered), and a hymn to the Lee-Edwards line, "the wholly obedient person of death" who must keep to its own function and not be abused: "to use a rifle as less than it is"; a truce on quarterstaff, musk, symbol, display, "belongs to tyranny".

This poem includes the phrase "let's evade the modernities", which has been quoted against Murray, as symbolic of the fact that he seems to reject the techniques of modernism, the prevailing mode in Australian poetry. Perhaps he does; but he is a highly sophisticated user of language, and there is nothing archaic or limited about his stylistic range or his handling of tones and forms. He is a linguist (he worked for some years as a translator) with an enthusiastic appetite for words

and a joyfully profligate energy in using them. The risk he runs is that of verbosity; although he strikes off more than his share of memorable phrases, and can manage a neatly satirical three-liner, he needs length for his best effects, and occasionally runs to excess. A few of the poems in this selection have been slightly abridged from their earlier forms, and a number of the more ephemeral or topical ones have been omitted. But there are plenty left, and they offer us a whole world to inhabit, vividly realized and available to the senses.

"Bent Water" in the Tasmanian Highlands" brilliantly presents that most difficult of sights to describe, rapidly flowing water in close-up; and there are convincing journeys by bus, car, helicopter, pony and bicycle. In these and other travels place is not all: Murray is constantly aware of time and its effects, from prehistory onwards. The word "century" is an indicator of this: in "The Conquest" he has Governor Phillips "recalling into his century", and in "The Sydney Highrise Variations" (he can celebrate cities, too) he sees other significances in the word.

Two long poems or sequences are particularly important. "Walking to the Cattle Place" explores the culture of cattle-keeping peoples from its early emergence in Asia (the first section is called "Samurai") to the present-day Australia, where barefoot children get up at dawn to bring in the cows for milking; "They will never forget their quick-lade cow-pies, slippers / nor chasing such warmth over white frost, saffron to steam." It will make them and bankers. There are excursions into myth and folk-tradition and into the origins of written language: the symbol Aleph, beginning the alphabet, is "that trussed rough-breathing or turned downward to lead / all Europe's journey". Section 10, on the names and characters of cattle in a particular herd, is called "The Bosphorus Coin"; the adjective gives a label to a concept which has now become deeply significant in Murray's thinking, that of the rural "Bosphorus" civilization with its emphasis on family life, tradition, religion, and individual personal qualities of endurance, as opposed to the urban "Athenian" culture in which philosophy and political theory develop, and independence of thought

is encouraged. In Athens drama and the arts flourish; in Bosphorus their place is taken by dancing and sport.

The Bosphorus way of life is depicted in another long poem, "The Buladelah-Taree Holiday Song Cycle", a rich and exuberant piece which charts the journeys and the experiences of city people returning to the country for their holidays. "Fresh sheets have been spread and tucked tight, childhood rooms have been seen to, / for this is the season when children return with their children / to the place of Bingham's Ghost, of the Old Timber Wharf, of the Big Flood That Time..." The families explore their childhood haunts, swim, have picnics and barbecues, and talk with the farmers and timber-workers who still live their serious lives in the country. This poem has links with another of Murray's preoccupations: Aboriginal culture. It is written in the style and metre of Berndt's translation of an Aranda chant, "The Moon Bone Cycle", and includes hidden references to that cycle's contents and ideas. At the end of the poem another influence appears, when the stars come out and "people look up from the farms, before going back; they gaze at their year's work of stars; / The Cross hangs downward..." In this section linking the people's activities with heaven and the stars there are reminders not only of primitive attitudes but also of Murray's own Catholic faith, another element in his generally democratic concern: "The Cross" is surely not only the Southern Cross.

Murray has said, "I want my poems to be more than just National Parks of sentimental preservation." And they are far more than that; but whether they can achieve his aim of reaching large numbers of non-literary readers and putting across the message of reconciliation implicit in his title, is questionable. He is too subtle and too steeped in cultural traditions to strike "the groundnote of unassuming art" more than occasionally. But his generous, witty, good-tempered poems are immensely likeable (see for example his "Quintets for Robert McElroy", an ode to the fact "We were probably the 'earliest' civilized, and probably the 'humanest'") and his combination of clear-headed fact-finding with a transcending optimism leaves a good taste in the mouth.

## Failing the test of war

Christopher Seton-Watson

MACGREGOR KNOX

Mussolini Unleashed, 1939-1941: Politics and Strategy in Fascist Italy's Last War  
385pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£22.50.  
0 521 23917 6

On June 12, 1936, in the mood of euphoria created by Italy's victory over Ethiopia, the British ambassador in Rome reported that the view of the foreign minister, Ciano, "that Italy is now the military equal of any other nation in Europe is at present very widely held in this country". No one held it more strongly than Mussolini. Three years later Franco's victory in the Spanish civil war, aided by massive Italian intervention, confirmed Mussolini in his complacent belief that he would be easily won. He was confident that by 1942 Italy would be ready to embark on his long-meditated assault on Britain and France, in order to "break free from her Mediterranean prison".

But Hitler's precipitate launching of war in September 1939 found Italy unprepared. There ensued nine months of "secret torment" as Mussolini himself described them. It was Hitler's defeat of France in May 1940 which finally "unleashed" him. But Italy's "parallel war" in the Mediterranean, under Mussolini's personal direction, rapidly led to disaster. By the end of 1940 he was forced to beg for the German military help which he had hitherto resolutely refused, and to submit once again to being "leashed", this time by Hitler.

These are the main themes of MacGregor Knox's story of the years 1939-41, which he tells in greater depth and detail than any previous American or British historian. He modestly describes his book as "a small contribution to the far from complete task of understanding the Fascist past". There are no sweeping revisionist judgments, Mussolini's vanity and ambition, his "military dilettantism", his capacity for self-deception by his own propaganda, and his growing isolation in a small circle of sycophants, are all confirmed. But what Professor

Knox demonstrates more clearly than any previous biographer or historian is the limits of Mussolini's power. In particular, thanks to exhaustive research in the relevant archives (especially the files of the Navy and Air Force ministries in the central archive in Rome and those of the *Comando Supremo* and the Italian army in Washington), he has been able to throw important new light on Mussolini's relations with his military advisers and commanders. His scholarship is first-class, and for once a publisher's blurb does not exaggerate in claiming that his book is "superbly written". He has clearly demonstrated both the need and the value of such detailed studies, to supplement the more general works, and it is to be hoped that this example will be followed by others.

Knox declines to dismiss Mussolini merely as a bluffer or a journalist or a clown, though all these facets may be found in this complex character. His imperialist goals, Knox argues, were "consistent in nature, massive in scope, and pursued with tenacity within the weaknesses imposed". Behind many of Mussolini's apparently irrational and impetuous decisions Knox detects a greater degree of rational calculation than most previous writers have allowed. For instance, he suggests that Mussolini's last-minute declaration of war on June 10, 1940, was not, as most historians have assumed, inspired solely by greed for a share of the spoils when France surrendered. He had in fact already decided to launch a Mediterranean war before France had become apparent. And Knox explains his directive to his army on the Alpine front not to take the offensive (rescinded only on June 19, after France had asked for an armistice) not by the desire to fight a "phony" rather than a serious war, but by the determination to conserve his troops for the Mediterranean war, forward with relish. This would also explain his drastic reduction of Italy's claims against prostrate France during the armistice negotiations. Excessive claims might have driven the French into continuing the war in North Africa, whereas France's elimination through surrender freed his hands

against Britain. Knox also shows that Mussolini's insistence on taking part in the Battle of Britain was prompted at least in part by his fears throughout the summer of 1940 that Britain and Germany might make a compromise peace which would destroy all Italian hopes of aggrandizement in the Mediterranean. On July 22, Ciano recorded that "now, more than ever, he wants war".

Italy's massive rearmament after 1936, with its emphasis on a big navy (especially submarines) and air force, seems to Knox clear evidence that Mussolini's bellicosity was not just bluff. It is of course true that in 1939 Italy lacked any coherent war plans and that her armed forces suffered from grave deficiencies in training and equipment. For this Mussolini as political dictator, and since 1925 minister for all three services, must bear the major share of responsibility. He was certainly guilty of hampering "the intelligent coordination of the armed forces", and of reluctance to recognize or remedy inefficiency. Nevertheless, as Knox puts it, "Mussolini had to take his generals as he found them: even the replacement of obvious incompetents was fraught with potential risk, given the monarchy's special relationship with the military". Many of the shortcomings were due to deeply entrenched professional traditions and prejudices, which even a man with the knowledge that Mussolini would have had difficulty in overcoming. Mussolini had some justification in his complaint that his generals in the 1940s were still trying to fight World War One; and Knox shows how formidable were their powers of passive resistance to his orders.

Most of them suffered from what a German admiral called "an inner lack of dash... a striving for the greatest possible security". There were a few exceptions. General Briole-declared in May 1940 that his air force "can and should take some offensive action", but he was overruled by his superior, the chief of general staff, Badoglio. The Duke of Aosta, viceroy of Ethiopia, wished to follow up his success in occupying British Somaliland in July 1940 with an attack on the Sudan, but received no encouragement from Rome and finally

gave up. Badoglio was incurably pessimistic. Graziani, commander in Libya throughout the summer of 1940 and "deployed" all his ingenuity to persuade Rome that land attack on Egypt was unfeasible. The chief of naval staff, Admiral Cavagnari, was obsessed by the need to conserve his battleships and insisted on a defensive strategy, limited to the protection of Italian sea communications and defence of the Italian coast. On July 9, and again on August 31, in brief clashes with the British fleet, he ordered his ships to withdraw from the engagement rather than risk losses. As one reads Knox's account of these events, one almost begins to sympathize with Mussolini's frustrations.

Knox records three significant occasions on which Mussolini overcame this resistance to engaging in battle. On June 21 the Italian army acted on his direct order to attack on the Alpine front, but France's surrender came too soon afterwards for the wisdom of Mussolini's decision to be tested. On September 9, Graziani was at last prodded into action, and his capture a week later of the Egyptian desert outpost, Sidi Barrani, made Mussolini "radiant" with joy. On the third occasion, the attack on Greece on October 28, the illusion of easy victory lasted only a few days. Humiliation at the hands of the Greeks coincided with the sinking of three of Cavagnari's battleships by British naval aircraft in Taranto harbour. "Mussolini and Cavagnari", Knox writes, "had lost Italy's war at sea".

On December 9 the British attacked in the Western Desert and in two months drove Graziani's army back 500 miles. On February 12, 1941, Rommel landed at Tripoli and assumed *de facto* command. This, says Knox, ended "the Italian war in Africa". The end came in the Balkans early in March when Mussolini finally abandoned hope of defeating Greece without German help. The Germans invaded Greece on April 6 and achieved in three weeks the victory which the Italians had failed to achieve in five months. By then it was clear, to quote Knox's opening paragraph, that Italian fascism "had failed the only test its founder recognized as valid, the test of war".

## The Republican trail

Jasper Ridley

OLIVER KNOX

From Rome to San Marino: A walk in the steps of Garibaldi.  
200pp. Collins. £9.95.  
0 00 216297 0

The travel book is not always a satisfactory way of writing about history. An author's account of the petty difficulties which he encountered in his travels, and the sometimes jars with his description of the dramatic historical events which occurred in the same places in earlier centuries, and can reduce the epic achievements of the past to the level of the trivialities of the author's experiences. Oliver Knox, who walked with his son along Garibaldi's route from Rome to San Marino, has avoided these pitfalls. His stories of misunderstandings at Heathrow Airport and of the shortage of hotels in Tirol mix well with his account of Garibaldi's exploits in July 1849. Only readers who have an insurmountable aversion to the travel book as history will be exasperated by his approach.

Knox states that he knew nothing about Garibaldi's march north until he began his walk and his research for this book; but he has acquired an exhaustive knowledge of the subject in a short time. He has studied not only the more important modern works but also the first-hand report of Garibaldi by his follower, Hoffmeister, the contemporary newspaper, and later nineteenth-century works, as well as a number of unpublished local documents. He has inspected the buildings where Garibaldi stayed and

the commemorative plaques in the towns and villages through which he passed, and has traced the previous and subsequent careers of several of the rather obscure personages who served under Garibaldi on the expedition.

The retreat from Rome in 1849 was the most dramatic and moving of all of Garibaldi's many adventures in Europe and South America. After defending Rome for two months against the French army which Louis Napoleon had sent to overthrow the Roman Republic and restore the rule of the Pope - and taking time off in the intervals in the fighting to defeat the Neapolitan army to the south - he realized that Rome could not be held after the final French assault on June 30. He refused to surrender, and led some 4,000 volunteers to carry on resistance in the countryside, with his pregnant wife, Anita, by his side. For a month he avoided the encircling armies of four European powers, totalling 80,000 men, and on July 30 reached San Marino. But it was a time of reaction and defeat; the peasants failed to join him; many of his men deserted. When he left San Marino in an attempt to reach the last Republican stronghold in Venice, only 200 men followed him; and they were scattered and captured by the Austrian Navy at Magnavacca, leaving Garibaldi alone with the dying Anita and one comrade, Leggero. Anita died in the marshes, but Garibaldi and Leggero reached safety in the kingdom of Piedmont.

Mr Knox's well-written, interesting and pleasant book suffers from one drawback. This journey "in the steps of Garibaldi" was undertaken by a pilgrim who seems to have more sympathy for Pope Pius IX than for the revolutionary partisan who preceded

him on his route. He pays some tributes to Garibaldi's energy and courage, but the general picture is unfavourable. Certainly Garibaldi occasionally shot deserters and looters in his army; but it is misleading to suggest that he was an aloof and unapproachable martinet, whose men cried "Viva Garibaldi!" because they were afraid of the consequences if they did not. Against this repeated emphasis on Garibaldi's brutality, Knox makes only one grudging admission that his men loved as well as feared him. He positively dislikes Anita Garibaldi; and he has a low opinion of Garibaldi's English follower, Colonel Hugh Forbes, of the burly wine-merchant and demagogue, Ciceruacchio, and of all the Garibaldini, except for Hoffmeister and possibly the priest, Ugo Bassi.

I agree with him that the assassination of the Pope's moderate conservative Prime Minister, Count Rossi, by the Republicans in Rome "deserves more, far more, than the tut-tut of liberal historians". Knox believes that it cast an "indelible slur" on Garibaldi's cause. It reveals the moral attitude of the nineteenth-century Italian Radicals - including, to some extent, Garibaldi - who considered that they were justified in killing despots and their ministers who were oppressors of the people. Not every historian is as certain as Knox and Trevelyan that Ciceruacchio's son was the murderer of Rossi. If he was, it was unfortunate that another man was convicted of the crime by the courts of Pius IX.

Knox's attitude has its advantages. We are spared another hagiographical work eulogizing "the Hero" in one of those attempts, still fashionable in Italy, to portray Garibaldi as a

champion of the Establishment, of military discipline, of traditional moral values, and of national unity. But Knox's lack of emotional involvement makes it impossible for him to bring out the drama and pathos of Garibaldi's ordeal in 1849. Trevelyan was mistaken in thinking that Garibaldi had the political and moral outlook of an English Edwardian liberal, but his mistake enabled him to write his sympathetic and brilliant description of that terrible and heroic march. Knox is equally mistaken in believing that the Garibaldini were all terrorized hoodlums, trembling in fear of their leader, with no trace of revolutionary idealism.

Had it not been for this defect, I would have wished that Knox had not ended the story at San Marino on July 31, 1849, but had continued his book to September 2, and travelled on to Cesenatico, to Magnavacca (today Porto Garibaldi, where every street in the village is named after a comrade, a place, or a date associated with Garibaldi), to the house at Mandrolite where Anita died, and on across Italy to the shore at Cala Martina, where Garibaldi embarked and sailed to safety. He would then have provided us with more well-written and informative chapters; but he is not the man to write about Anita's death.

*Approaches to Gramsci* (254pp, London: writers and readers. £7.95, paperback. £3.95. 0 906495 55 5) edited by Anne Showstack Sassoon includes contributions on "Gramsci and Marxist Political Theory" by Eric Hobsbawm, "Hegemony and Consent" by Christine Buci-Glucksmann, "Gramsci's Language" by Pier Paolo Pasolini and "Gramsci's Observations on Polkors" by Alberto Maria Cirese.

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## Post-settlement prosperity

Colin Newbury

W. H. OLIVER and B. R. WILLIAMS (Editors)

The Oxford History of New Zealand  
372pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford  
University Press. £18.50.  
0 19 558062 1

This handsome volume marks a new stage in self-awareness in New Zealand historiography. With a few exceptions the contributors belong to a generation of academic teachers and researchers formed in the fortunate 1950s, drawing on a rich accumulation of published works and theses within New Zealand's universities.

Their sixteen chapters are grouped into four sections divided by the crises of annexation and the two depressions of the 1890s and 1930s. Each chapter deals with a phase of political, economic and social history, and there are five chapters on the Maoris and race relations. There is a concluding chapter by W. H. Oliver on the contribution of the arts and literature to a sense of identity in contemporary New Zealand society.

The value of this structure is that each of the main themes can be read in chronological sequence. It is not *histoire totale*, and one must regret the lack of any detailed treatment of New Zealand's external relations and foreign policy, an omission which is particularly felt in the chapters dealing with international trade or the effects of two world wars. Nor is it the "social history" claimed in the editors' introduction, if only because the informative and analytical chapters by Erik Olsen and Graeme Dunstan on demographic and social changes between 1890 and the 1970s are of a much higher standard and make use of better statistical materials than the impressionistic treatment of settler society in the mid-nineteenth century, when a consideration of the diversity of migrant origins is called for but is not provided.

The conclusions reached by Olsen and Dunstan, however, stress the homogeneity of rural and urban communities by the end of the century, despite some radicalism in the depression years, curbed by increases in the corporate power of the state, the reforms of the Liberals and the quiet revolution in expectations. They also stress that the problems of reconstruction and welfare after the 1890s were partly ones of affluence and income distribution in a society which was increasingly employed in the service sector. Both contributors have trouble applying class terminology to a society which refused to believe in conflict theory and advocated consensus behaviour and social conformity, until the challenge of minority protests in the 1960s coincided with politicians' inability to guarantee the security and stability taken for granted for thirty years.

The reasons for relative prosperity in conditions of trade and capital dependency occupy the chapters dealing with economic themes and provide some of the most valuable and original writing in the volume. A good deal of New Zealand history will be reconsidered in the light of the contributions by W. J. Gardner, Tom Brooking and G. R. Hawke, who provide a better understanding for the economic failure of the Crown Colony period, the growth of banking, joint-stock ventures and mortgage finance, and farming efficiency in the 1920s. Hawke's analysis of the economy from 1938, which marked a general watershed in the country's fortunes and management, explains why Labour's policy of insulating New Zealand from the effects of cheap imports faltered and failed towards the end of the 1960s. The underlying growth trends were remarkable enough to sustain a welfare programme, however, though the government influenced rather than controlled through its licensing system. The role of the Public Service in this and other features of New Zealand's inter-war growth has yet to be investigated, but the broad trends of boom and borrowing from the 1870s until the oil crisis of 1973 have been firmly outlined, and the gaps (such as

the working of New Zealand's budgets) have been conscientiously indicated.

The chapters on political history can be read as a commentary on the efforts of coteries of farmers, businessmen and labour leaders to preserve the benefits of this fortunate dependency while enlarging their power base from the 1890s by founding parties. Raewyn Dalziel skilfully narrates the better-known period of early responsible government, stressing the politics of jobbery, rather than the evolution of a constitution within a framework of law. Len Richardson deals with the Liberal period, drawing on new studies of elections, and makes clear just why Liberals drew back from the full implications of Reeves's programme and found more in common with rural conservatives. Robert Chapman balances his account of Labour's

triumph in 1935 with a better understanding of the reorganization of the National Party as the country reached the limits of tolerable socialization in a mixed economy. By the 1950s there were signs of political stasis as neither party swung marginal seats very far and New Zealanders were content to reap the benefits of produce prices and expanded health and education services. Chapman faults Labour on electoral tactics, but the "golden 1960s" also marked the end of certainties about the working of the political system, whose adequacy might have been discussed at this stage of consensus politics when expectations were disappointed, the younger generation was alienated, and Labour was trounced and collapsed after 1975.

## Pre-suburban heroines

Anne Chisholm

Mrs AENEAS GUNN

We of the Never-Nevers  
238pp. Hutchinson. £5.95.  
0 09 047093 1

JILLIAN ROBERTSON

Lizard Island: A reconstruction of the Life of Mrs Watson  
176pp. Hutchinson. £7.95.  
0 09 137140 6

In its prolonged search for a cultural identity, Australia, like other former colonies, keeps reaching into the dark cupboard of the past. But the true past of the Australian continent – its Aboriginal culture and tradition – is inaccessible to most of the modern population. The next best thing, therefore, is to re-explore or re-create the moments of shock and drama which occurred when white immigrants confronted for the first time the vast, beautiful and terrifying continent.

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Finally, as one would expect, race relations are generously analysed in

five chapters on Maori history, from Polynesian foundations until the conscience-searching of the 1960s. Janet M. Davidson surveys the archaeological evidence of settlement patterns and banishes the "generalised New Zealander" for a more diversified Maori, hardly but short-lived, whose economy, kinship and political structure cannot be easily stereotyped. The emphasis on regional variation and revision of earlier interpretations which accepted "anarchy" and "depopulation" as results of European contact is continued by J. M. R. Owens, who gets rid of the all-purpose "noble" Maori along with his cannibalism, which we are told "left a serious gap in diet". The period of land purchases, wars and confiscation is treated in detail by Ann Parsonson and M. P. K. Sorrenson, who confirm recent work on the ambiguities of a Treaty of Waitangi and government

and settler policies, while stressing the variety of Maori reactions and reconciliations with the Pakeha invasion. "Neither peasants nor proletarians", the Maoris remained a marginal set of rural communities whose revival is thoughtfully described by Michael King in terms that suggest reasons for the tensions of the 1960s and give credit both to Maori leadership and Gordon Coates as Native Minister and Prime Minister. The effects of the Second World War period on Maori self-help and political organization complement the chapters on general social change.

Altogether, this is a work which consolidates advances in New Zealand historical scholarship since the 1950s, while leaving the way open for a less introspective interpretation of a successful political democracy by a future generation.

dreaded by the men that she met in the bush, all of whom initially opposed her presence in their world. A "respectable" woman (neither a black nor a prostitute) was likely to be either a Snorter (domineering) or a Freezer (haughty); she would either complain about rough conditions or set about unnecessary tidying up. Above all, there was no place for a woman in the most crucial relationship in both the reality and the mythology of pioneer Australia: mateship between men.

The men in *We of the Never-Nevers* with the exception of the over-idealized "Maluka" (the Aborigines' name for her husband and their mutual lord and master), are brilliantly convincing characters of the kind that appear again and again in the stories of Henry Lawson and Steele Rudd. Mrs Gunn captures the idiom of the Sanguine Scot, the Head Stockman, the Dandy, Cheon the Chinese cook, and Fizzer the mailman, by simply writing down what they said. When she rhapsodizes about their strong brown hands and tender hearts, or describes the "honest sunlight" or the midnight sky, she becomes sentimental; but

when she quotes: "Had bandicoot once fer me Christmas dinner" or "Awful dry wet we're having" the voice of early Australia comes through.

Although she writes of "niggers", "boys" and "lubbies", her heart was in the right place as far as the Aborigines were concerned. She is wonderfully and unselfconsciously funny about her battles with Nellie, the large black woman who smoked, spat, smelt, wore "scanty" garments and insisted on her right to work in the homestead; but when she goes on a "nigger hunt" to track down blacks who have killed, she proclaims their right to break the white man's law because of what the white man did to them. Finally, the book is still worth reading today because Mrs Gunn truly loved the country and its people, despite the tragic end to her one year in the Never-Nevers (so-called because it can never, never be forgotten): her husband caught a fever and died, and she returned to genteel Melbourne and wrote her book.

Although the bush made her a widow, Mrs Gunn survived. The pathetic heroine of *Lizard Island*, Mary Watson, did not. Hers is one of the true horror stories of the early days, in which extraordinary courage by a very ordinary woman was not rewarded. She went to tropical North Queensland from Cornwall as a girl in the 1870s after her father's bankruptcy. She started a school, then married a sailor, who had become a sea-fishing fisherman and went to live with him on Lizard Island, on the Great Barrier Reef, then inhabited only by blacks. Her son was born there and three months later her husband went on a fishing expedition further north, leaving her and the baby with two Chinese servants. The aborigines attacked them, killed one Chinese and spared the other. Mary Watson somehow got the wounded man, the baby, and herself into the old metal tank used for boiling the sealings and launched it into the sea. They floated for ten days before running aground on a small coral atoll. Having her diary with her, in short bleak sentences she records how they died. Their skeletal remains were found four months later; her baby was clasped to her breast. The tank is now on display in the Queensland Museum.

It should have been impossible to ruin this story but Jillian Robertson has almost done so. She claims to have done careful research and to have made much use of original sources, but her "reconstruction" is sadly novelettish, full of strange forebodings, unauthenticated dimples and sentences like "This little bit of Cornwall would always be in their hearts"; she describes the relations of whites to aborigines as "a them-or-us situation". The life and death of Mrs Watson deserve either a meticulous scholarly account, or transmutation by a novelist, painter or film director. This inadequate depiction underlines the fact that so far only a very few Australian talents – indeed perhaps only Sidney Nolan and Patrick White, both of whom were once inspired by the somewhat similar story of Eliza Fraser – have proved equal to the challenge of transmuting the reality of earlier Australian experience.

Peter Redgrove

## The constable's lot

George Rudé

LAINE CAMERON

Crime and Repression in the  
Auvergne and the Guyenne 1720–  
1790  
283pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£18.50  
0 521 23882 X

This is a history of the *maréchaussée*, the armed provincial constabulary of eighteenth-century France, of its officers and courts and its operations in two of France's southern *généralités*, the Guyenne, with its principal city at Bordeaux, and the far wilder and more isolated Auvergne, with its main centre at Riom. As the author tells us, despite its importance as a peacekeeping force, the *maréchaussée*, compared with the vast sums lavished on Court and Army, was cheap and scarcely served as a drain on the nation's resources. Its annual budget was a little over four million *livres* and men did not exceed 4,000, of whom 112 were stationed in the Guyenne and a mere 100 in the Auvergne. With such meagre earnings offering a constant stimulus to dishonesty, it is remarkable that corruption, though a constant worry to those in authority, proved to be on so small a scale. The great exception was the case of the *Seigneurie*, enjoying the top rank of *prévôt-général*, who was

only exposed and brought to trial after more than a decade of "extortion, speculation and abuse of authority". During these years this accomplished villain arrested 69 innocent individuals of varying ranks and fortunes, jailed them without authority and blackmailed and bled his prisoners to feather his own nest. But this was an unusual case belonging to the late 1720s and early 1730s; after this standards of honesty steadily improved and, of a dozen trials involving the police in the two provinces, only one took place after 1760.

The longest and most important chapter in the book is entitled "the *maréchaussée* at work" and deals with the great variety of law-enforcing activities in which it became involved. One of these, well suited to a country which, in the eighteenth century, was constantly at war, was the confiscation of weapons from those not entitled to possess them. This was always a problem for governments whenever arms followed an edict by the Regent of 1716, after the long wars of the Spanish Succession and the death of Louis XIV. To persuade people to give up their weapons, even when backed up by the threat of fines and military coercion, was no easy matter as just about everyone from aristocrats to ecclesiastics, innkeepers and artisans – all in fact but the very poor – had a social or purely utilitarian purpose for hanging on to them. It kept

reinterpreting, the considerable quantity of Castilian royal taxation evidence, Dr MacKay makes available for the first time in print some important material on prices and wages in the account books of the Burgos Cathedral chapter. He surveys in a clear, robust and workmanlike manner the economic regions into which fifteenth-century Castile might be divided, the main features of the royal taxation system, the supply of precious metals to the kingdom, the available evidence on prices and wages, and the vicissitudes of royal monetary policy. Finally, he points to some remarkable coincidences between currency manipulations and political and social upheavals, providing further illustrations of the role of devaluation and debasement as instruments of royal absolutism.

On the author's own admission, this is a pioneering study. Almost anything on Castilian monetary policy in the period would be useful, but MacKay succeeds in making an important contribution. It must be stressed, though, that many of the conclusions, particularly concerning prices and wages, are based on isolated, though excellent, material from Burgos and Seville. These are important regions but cannot necessarily stand for the rest of Spain. It is to be hoped that further research will now fill in some of the gaps.

Dr MacKay has obviously kept in mind the difference between metallic currency and the money of account, but he does not make a clear distinction between the "international" precious metal currencies and the local, base-metal billon, which had a far greater influence on the living standards of ordinary people and was so much more subject to official manipulation. It seems at times to be assumed, in the excitement of the argument, that tampering with the gold and silver coinage would directly and automatically affect the population as a whole. Also, evidence from France and Burgundy, where illegal seigniorial mints were an important factor in the undermining of currencies and living standards, suggests that there is something remarkable and unusual in MacKay's picture of aristocratic monetary virtue, as contrasted with royal profligacy, in Castile.

Finally, the book fails to draw attention to the probable limitations of the importance of cash in determining the development of late medieval economies, let alone societies. Even today, the monetarist explanation of economic and social development is by no means unchallenged, and in earlier centuries, it was not only Guyennais, or the Castilians of Henry IV's reign, who resorted to barter and the "black" economy.

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life the long procession of prisoners that appeared before it, particularly in the Périgord (a part of the Guyenne) where the judicial records are most complete. In fact, one of the author's greatest virtues is to have "personalized" what might have been a dreary piece of administrative history by his constant resort to the case-histories of prisoners.

The same concern to bring individual prisoners into focus informs his treatment of grain rioters in the Périgord, for which the documentation is far richer than for the Auvergne or indeed for other parts of the Guyenne. It enables him to look the individual rioter in the face, as at Ribérac, where from a sample of 60 prisoners he concludes that "the typical rioter was the ordinary urban artisan or shopkeeper and his wife", with a complete absence of master craftsmen and all outsiders, vagabonds and destitutes. This picture helps him to explain (as it might also for England) the almost complete absence in such affairs at this time of physical violence against persons. So he expresses no surprise at all that the tradition was carried on into the far more extensive rural revolts of 1789, when "the peasants of the Périgord made their revolution a festive occasion".

It is a pity that this book has a rather forbidding title – a pity because it is extremely interesting, well written and presented, and deserves, therefore, to be read far more widely than I fear it may be.

## Bent forkfuls

J. M. J. Rogister

JOHN A. CAREY

Judicial Reform in France before the Revolution of 1789  
162pp. Harvard University Press.  
£15.75  
0 674 48878 4

On the first page of this book we are asked to consider the case of a person who finds a fork with a bent tine. A "traditional" reformer would either bend back the tine to restore the fork to its original shape or melt it down and recast it to that shape; a "modern" reformer would change the metal or the design of the fork: that much we owe to Descartes. This distinction has at least the merit of simplicity, though some may feel that its application will not leave them any wiser about the processes of judicial reform under the *ancien régime*, or in any other society for that matter. Besides, John A. Carey neatly disposes of the simplicity of the concept by alleging a confusion in the minds of eighteenth-century advocates of reform between "traditional" and "modern" aims.

If he had displayed in the course of his work a greater awareness of the social and political fabric of the *ancien régime*, he would have discovered that

it is only his approach that is confusing and certainly old-fashioned. The bent chestnuts are here in force. "The absolutist rule of the Bourbons relied instead on intendants" – instead of on courts of law. The crown sacrificed "national production" by allowing money that "might otherwise have been invested in industry and commerce" to be put into venal offices.

Carey's treatment of the attempts at judicial reform in the mid-eighteenth century consists of setting up three disjuncts, the Abbé de St Pierre, Chancellor Daguesseau, and the Marquis d'Argenson. With little regard for the date of publication of their respective treatises, the circumstances in which they were written, the audience they attained, the impact they had and, above all, the political, social and economic context of the age, the author can only treat one to a résumé and a critique of what they wrote. His résumé is undoubtedly a welcome introduction to the subject, and some interesting considerations about the reform of the pre-1789 courts emerge. These courts were clearly crucial in any attempts at change.

As Carey himself is aware, only a small number of people were actively interested in judicial reform, and they were mainly lawyers. He tries to extract a general view from the provinces, but his sample is woefully inadequate.



## From con to pro

Richard Parish

ROBERT J. NELSON

Pascal: Adversary and Advocate  
286pp. Harvard University Press.  
£15.75  
0 674 65615 6

Pascal's short life was no sooner spent than it was seized on by members of his family and made into the stuff of a legend. Chateaubriand over a century later wrote in his *Génie du Christianisme* of the "effrayant génie" that was Pascal, a man who "ayant achevé de parcourir le cercle des sciences humaines, s'aperçut de leur néant, et tourna ses pensées vers la religion". One document in particular, the *Mémorial* in which Pascal records his experience of conversion, reinforces a dramatic view of this event, with its evocation of a "nuit de feu". More recently it is the coherence of Pascal's corpus that has been stressed: patterns of thought and rhetoric manifested in his pre-apologetic work are not abandoned, but taken up, transformed and

rearranged into elements of the great mosaic of the *Pensées*. One of these perspectives of change and continuity, paradox and paradigm, will probably be dominant in any general biographical survey of Pascal, and the emphasis of the work under review is on change.

Robert J. Nelson's study is first and foremost a biography of Pascal (and, in the first part of the book, of his family), in which the author, coming down on the side of complexity against any "univocal conception of Pascal's character" seeks nevertheless to present "the first rounded portrayal" of his "querulous, intense, ever-committed" subject. Nelson sees the two epithets of his title, adversary and advocate, as describing the major urges of Pascal's career, linked by a transitional period. The change of tone that represents the move from adversarial writing (in science and theology) to advocacy comes for Nelson before the seventeenth and eighteenth of the *Lettres Provinciales*, in whose concisive tone he sees an implicit rejection of the methods of the earlier letters. And then in a neat coda he suggests that Pascal passes rapidly

through these two phases again in the last years of his life.

Within this, Nelson's approach to Pascal is threefold, concentrating on "linguistics, theology and personal development". The latter looms large in the first half of the book, and it is not surprising to find that it is from the best-documented facts of Pascal's biography that the most rewarding inferences are drawn: for example, the early death of Pascal's mother and his ambiguous relationship with his father are seen as influencing his attitude towards father figures (God the Father, the Church Fathers, *les pères jésuites*). Beyond that, some of the information seems too conjectural to support development, or really to be very interesting: the rôle of paterfamilias that, after the death of his father, Pascal "may have used with Jacqueline" could have been "as a surrogate for the rôle of lover whose imperatives may have caused him great anguish" (my italics). Well, yes, perhaps.

The theological and linguistic axes prevail in the later part of the book. Close and deserved attention is given to the *Ecrits sur la Grâce*, and above

all to the *Lettres Provinciales*, emphasizing their central place in the Pascalian canon, as well as their importance for an understanding of the projected apology. On the linguistic plane the *décalogue* between signifier and signified in Jesuit discourse is carefully demonstrated: for Pascal's Jesuit words "refer only to one another", divorced as they are from the Supreme Signified which is God. Nelson devotes some attention to the uses of the first person in Pascal, although does not perhaps pursue this important question far enough (could not Pascal's adoption of the first-person Christ voice in the *Mystère de Jésus* have more significance than the author suggests?) and to pseudonyms. The *Pensées* (in the Sellier edition) are dealt with less fully than might be expected, but emerge in Nelson's view as the supreme text of advocacy, wherein Pascal's purpose is "not to convert but to divert, not to prove but to disprove, not to demonstrate but to remonstrate"; as the text of the "ascendancy of the Son"; as "contratext" rather than "intertext" of the Pascalian canon.

Pascal is quoted throughout in Nelson's own, occasionally eccentric

(to an English reader) translation. The desirability of this seems questionable on two counts: first, he uses a good deal of quotation from early and less well-known material, recently edited by Jean Mesnard. Would this not be more valuable in the original? Because, and second, this is hardly (pace the dust-jacket) a book for the non-specialist, lacking as it does such extended account of these writings, using a good deal of modern critical language, and devoting only one relatively short chapter to what is after all the most universally known of Pascal's works. The bibliography is short and highly selective.

The book as a whole is substantial but tries to be too comprehensive. The difficulty of trying to organize, describe and contain in his life the writings of a man, much of whose corpus (let alone of whose biographical record) is manifestly fragmentary or incomplete, is enormous. Nelson certainly gives us a possible reading of Pascal, though I think not a definitive one. He also incites us to consider, in a characteristically Pascalian way, what sort of questions we might most pertinently ask of the available evidence in order to proceed further.

## Bi-centennial balance sheet

John Hope Mason

R. A. LEIGH (Editor)

Rousseau after 200 Years  
Proceedings of the Cambridge  
Bi-centennial Colloquium  
299pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£20  
0 521 23753 X

1978 was the bicentenary of Rousseau's death and throughout that year *rousseauistes*, *dis-huit-centistes* and birds of similar feather, gathered at conferences to discuss his work. This book contains the fourteen papers in English and French given at the conference held at Trinity College, Cambridge, under the aegis of R. A. Leigh, the doyen of Rousseau scholars; it also contains much of the discussions which arose out of the papers.

The initial aim of the conference was to draw up a balance-sheet of Rousseau's achievement. After two hundred years such an ambition might seem reasonable enough. But not with

Rousseau: his writings still retain today the ability both to dazzle and bewilder which captivated or enraged his first readers. The great merit of this collection of papers is that it enables us to see why that is the case, what it is about his ideas and their presentation that makes him both so important and at the same time so controversial a figure.

Several papers deal with his literary manner. Michel Launay develops the idea of an *écriture contractuelle*, a way of writing that implicitly (and explicitly) involves the reader, addressing him, appealing to him, provoking him. This notion has the virtue of stressing the essentially non-dogmatic character of Rousseau's work, but it is not precise enough to clarify what distinguishes it so sharply from that of his contemporaries. Jean Starobinski's analysis is more acute. He calls attention to the way Rousseau alternately (in Starobinski's terms) accuses and seduces; first he condemns, then he suggests something quite different. Starobinski has a tendency to overlook the fact that Rousseau's judgments (and dreams)

obtain their value from the extent to which we perceive them to be accurate (or possible). His emphasis on Rousseau's psychology ignores the real injustices of the world Rousseau lived in, the actual attacks made on him, and so forth. Nevertheless, his analysis is extremely perceptive. Much of the force of Rousseau's work undoubtedly stems from the way indictment and evocation are not only juxtaposed but essentially linked: modern man has gone grievously astray but he still has the potential to set things (and himself) aright.

How this might come about is, of course, the most contested area of Rousseau's work. There is virtually no support nowadays for the idea that he was in some sense a totalitarian, but his political writings still cause confusion. In part this comes from simple misunderstanding: the failure to take account of what he meant by *souveraineté*, *gouvernement*, and *democratie*, a failure evident in more than one of the papers here. But it also arises from certain difficulties and ambiguities in his ideas. This can be seen in the contributions of two of the outstanding exponents of Rousseau's thought: Robert Derathé, dealing with the place of private property in a fully equal society, and Bronislaw Baczko, on the different uses of language in political life. Both deal mainly with the *Contrat social*, though Baczko also makes use of the *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, a text which has come to occupy a prominent place in Rousseau studies. The other political writings – on Geneva, Corsica and Poland – do not give rise to such difficulties and they need to be taken into account in any overall assessment. But it is no accident that the *Contrat social* exerts a particular fascination, for it displays so clearly Rousseau's ability to go to the fundamentals of any issue.

This characteristic has long been recognized in his political writing. What is remarkable is the extent to which it applies to other aspects of his work. It is evident in his anthropology, described here by Robert Wokler, and in his writings on music, excellently discussed by Marie-Élisabeth Duché. The latter throws a sharp light both on Rousseau's thought-processes and the emotional impulses which lie behind them, and are accordingly of more than purely aesthetic interest.

Among the other subjects dealt with in this volume are ideas of imagination in *Emile*, of love in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and of *sentiment* generally. There is also a fascinating account of how the first posthumous edition of Rousseau's works, in particular the first part of the *Confessions*, came to be published. The book has been edited with meticulous efficiency by Professor Leigh, who himself makes some important interventions in the discussions. It may not be conclusive about the meaning of Rousseau's work, but it leaves us in no doubt about the scale of his achievement.

## The corporeal corpus

Carol Clark

JOHN O'NEILL

Essaying Montaigne  
A study of the Renaissance  
Institution of Writing and Reading  
259pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£12.50  
0 7100 0937 2

In a late addition to Chapter 18 of Book II of the *Essays*, Montaigne asserts rather disingenuously that his book, unlike all other books, was not "made", but somehow simply came to be, and that in latter years it has exerted as much influence upon its author as the author upon his creation. "Je n'ay pas plus fait mon livre que mon corps m'a fait, livre consubstantiel à son auteur". The allusion to the Creed (*genitum non factum, consubstantialem patri*) is as clear as it is daring. Montaigne was not deterred from making it by the fear of clerical disapproval; but if he could have foreseen the flights of fancy to which this sentence has given rise among twentieth-century critics of his work, he might perhaps have settled for something less flashy.

The title of John O'Neill's book is seriously misleading; he has relatively little to say (and virtually nothing that is new) about Renaissance habits of reading and writing. He does, on the other hand, have a great deal to say about the "consubstantiality" of the *Essays* with their author (on page 35 he informs us, with a fine disregard for the niceties of sixteenth-century theology, that "consubstantiality" was "the heart of the mass"), and about the "corporeal" qualities of Montaigne's writing and of human experience generally. Thus from his first sixteen pages alone we learn that "Montaigne reads with his body"; that the *Essays* are "a continuous bodily inscription"; that the *Essays* "push on steadily in a bodily odyssey"; while on page 13 we discover that "the *Essays* are Montaigne's body" and on page 14 that "we are Time's body". A moment later the *Essays* "constitute a definite and eternal moment of carnal knowledge".

Mr O'Neill's language will no doubt present less of a problem to many of his intended readers than to this reviewer. His book, after all, forms part of an International Library of Phenomenology and Moral Sciences of which he is the general editor, and he begins by telling us that he owes his interest in Montaigne to a prior love of Merleau-Ponty. Like Ronald's Muse, who "en français parlait grec et latin", O'Neill's seems to interpenetrate her English with memories of French and German words used in very specialized senses: by, for, instance, Barthes, "Joy" is a very precise translation of Barthes's *Joie*. But one twies it

to readers who perhaps do not have a very detailed acquaintance with Montaigne's own text to point out the places where O'Neill bends his subject's words, or the events of his life, in order to fit them into the desired pattern of "corporeality" and the rest. For example, his epigraph is "... essays in flesh and bone", and he picks up these words again on page 128, saying, "The *Essays*, as Montaigne himself tells us, are 'essays in flesh and bone'." What Montaigne in fact says, in Chapter 5 of Book III, is that if any readers of the *Essays* are sufficiently attracted by his text to want to meet him, they should just whistle and he will go and provide them with real live *Essays* in the flesh ("il n'est que de siffler et, comme, je leur tray fournir des *essays* en cher et en os").

Again, warning to his theme, O'Neill affirms that writing was essential to Montaigne; "it was a daily undertaking that he could no more go without than any other bodily function". In fact all the evidence we have suggests that the composition of the *Essays* was several times interrupted for as much as several years at a time. In saying things like "Montaigne had to write; his life became nothing apart from his literary life", O'Neill exhibits the myopia of the academic critic. It is indeed difficult for those of us whose lives are entirely taken up with reading and writing to realize that a man could read widely and write infinitely better than we do while also leading the lives of a noble family, politician and diplomat. But that is what Montaigne did.

Writing was both less and more important to Montaigne than O'Neill will allow. It was not his *raison d'être*; it was, however, a craft on which he spent much time and love, choosing, changing, adding and discarding words in order to arrive at the most forceful and satisfying combinations. O'Neill's lack of sympathy with his author perhaps becomes most apparent when, speaking of Montaigne's reworkings of his text, he asks, "Yet how could any one passage be an improvement upon another, coming from the pen of the same author?" This is assimilating writing to bodily function with a vengeance. Montaigne, on the other hand, thought it was the very mark of a perceptive reader to be able to see where a good author surpasses himself, and to show in detail how he does so, "weighing words, phrases and inversions one by one" (*Essays* III, 8). Such a detailed consideration of Montaigne's work clearly has no appeal for Mr O'Neill; indeed it could not be undertaken in a book all of whose quotations are given in English only.

Réymond Radiguet's novel *Le Diable au corps*, first published in 1923, has now been reissued in A. M. Sperduti Smith's 1968 translation, entitled *The Devil in the Flesh* (127pp. Marion Boyars, £3.95, 0 7145 0193 X).

## Starting from Stratford

Nicholas de Jongh

SALLY BEAUMAN

The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades  
388pp. Oxford University Press.  
£12.95  
0 19 212209 6

The installation of the Royal Shakespeare Company in its new London home at the Barbican centre coincided with reports that the company was experiencing financial anxieties of the kind which have sporadically bedevilled its existence in the last two decades. The conjunction of this debut with economic alarms gives piquancy and ironic relevance to Sally Beauman's historical survey (which is misleadingly titled, since the "royal" and "company" designations were only acquired within the last twenty years). It is a merit of this fascinating, often well-researched but uneven account that Miss Beauman explains why the RSC has come to the Barbican – nurturing a discreet grievance that it is undersubsidized, undervalued and unloved in high places. Our premier theatrical company may sometimes resemble, from the character of its public utterances, a youthful hypochondriac, with symptoms of paranoia and delusions of impending mortality, but the author shows that such an unsympathetic judgment needs to be tempered by awareness of the historic circumstances in which the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre transformed itself from a provincial festival playhouse into an ensemble performing a classical and modern repertoire. The opposition to this metamorphosis was powerful and prolonged.

It was Peter Hall's ambition to enlarge the scope of the Memorial Theatre, establishing it in London as a company founded upon long-term contract players and not restricted to Shakespeare. His scheme was first mooted in the late 1950s when the movement to build a National Theatre was gathering pace and urgency. Lord Catterall, the former Conservative cabinet minister, was the prime mover in that enterprise and appreciated that the Memorial Theatre's arrival in London could prejudice the creation of the National, since the government of the day would not have readily contemplated the idea of subsidizing two such separate organizations within the capital. The ensuing struggles, committee meetings, lobbying of politicians local and national, and

secret, opaque decisions and compromise were a microcosm of the process by which artistic policy is achieved in England today. The significance of the plan to amalgamate the National and the RSC was never fully grasped. Selwyn Lloyd, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, first refused to finance a National Theatre and then within months changed his mind. Grandiose schemes, involving both companies and the Old Vic were vaguely considered. By 1962 when the RSC had finally withdrawn from any plan to be absorbed within the future mightiness of the National, Hall was becoming convinced that RSC subsidy was being blocked by the Arts Council. Subsequently both Lord Catterall, the Conservative Chairman of the Arts Council at the time, and Lord Goodman who succeeded him, as well as Jennie Lee, seem to have been characterized by Hall as opponents of the funding of two major national theatres in London. Finally, when the private letter-writing received a Treasury warning that though it might choose to operate on "a National Theatre level" this did not necessarily guarantee comparable subsidy. In that response and those words lies the reason for the company's long-standing financial problems. The government and arts establishment of the day never wanted the RSC in London. It does not seem to now, on any terms the RSC feels able to accept.

Miss Beauman makes these crucial facts clear. But as befits someone whom the book-jacket describes as living with "RSC associate artist Alan Howard" she is a somewhat partisan observer in these matters and she makes some rather facile comparisons between the funding of the two national companies, while failing to consider just why the RSC as an association campaigned to persuade or force the councils within its Stratford environs to help with the subsidy of the Stratford theatre. Now it is based at the Barbican the RSC could leave its Midlands birthplace. The author would have strengthened her case by providing detailed figures which would show the extent to which the National pays all categories of its staff more than those at the RSC. Nor can her analysis of these conflicts be regarded as definitive since she depends overmuch on the reports of the late Fortham Flower, then Chairman of the Stratford governors. Dead men tell no tales but their testimony needs to be weighed against the reports of those still alive, Laurence Olivier, involved with the National Theatre's creation, is acknowledged in the preface as a

Frank Benson, who was responsible for the repertoire during most of Archie Flower's first two decades of control was as much a period-figure as his Chairman. This actor-manager was a scatterbrained egotist who in young manhood slept with his jaws tied up and would eat nothing but apple-tart for supper. His financial sense was negligible, and his Shakespearean repertoire narrow to the point of constriction. His productions congealed in theatrical aspic, were happily revived through years of

source but nowhere quoted, directly or otherwise. Lord Goodman and Lord Catterall, Jennie Lee and senior surviving Arts Council officials should have been called in evidence. It is strange that Miss Beauman appears to have consulted no Arts Council representative at all.

The book's two prime commitments are otherwise carefully and vividly fulfilled. First she describes the sequence of events which brought the Memorial Theatre to its eventual success. Second she sketches a history of Shakespearean production in Britain as seen, fitfully, through Stratford's hundred-year history. The attention paid to theatrical politics and Shakespearean interpretation is well balanced. And it is most revealing to see the extent to which the same debates and arguments have been rehearsed and fought out over the years: the battle between autocratic, revolutionary and visionary, the conflict between those who believed in the star system rather than an ensemble; austere styles of production as opposed to the spectacular; the history-based approaches of William Poel in dispute with the modernizers or compromisers. Those who subscribe to the thesis that arts bureaucrats, chairmen of theatrical boards, politicians of all sizes and hues and Arts Council emineces have tended to arrest and repress the development and vitality of the British theatre will here find fresh evidence to reinforce their views. If there is a villain in the book it is surely whom Miss Beauman reserves a wary admiration. He prows slyly through the book, dominating forty of the most mediocre years of the theatre's existence, penny-pinching, nagging, niggling, curtailing and concealing the extent of his own autocracy as Chairman. He ran the theatre like a family business, which in fact it was, packing the governing board with relatives and place people, and was as obsessed as *William* says with money, though to far more destructive effect and with far less reason.

At least the closing of these doors meant that the discarded men were available to aid the Memorial Theatre's new director Anthony Quayle in his successful efforts to establish Stratford as a fashionable and successful theatrical resort to which most of the famous players of the day would come. Quayle longed to see his theatre established in London, but the time was not ripe: Peter Hall achieved what Quayle had hoped to do. Miss

mediocrity. He adored the excesses of Victorian Shakespeare production and his *Midsummer Night's Dream*, though lacking live rabbits, had fifty infant children as fairies. Benson did not take liberties with Shakespeare's texts, he violated them freely, exciting the slightest hint of sexual allusion. He loved cricket and all sports, sometimes collecting actors who were more adept on the field than the stage. But his régime was notable for the way in which major stars of the Edwardian theatre like Forbes-Robertson and Martin Harvey were imported for seasons. This was thanks to Flower's intervention.

But it was also Flower who behaved foolishly in the early 1930s when the mild festival director William Bridges-Adams aspired to create an ensemble company and tried to revitalize Stratford with the alien, exciting ideas of Komisarjevsky, Reinhardt, Poel and Guthrie, the last of whom might have helped in forming an alliance with the Old Vic. Bridges-Adams was flummoxed by Flower's financial restrictions, his hostility to everything except plain man's Shakespeare, the inadequate rehearsal time and the tiny salaries for actors and the theatre resigned in despair and the theatre declined for a decade. Flower's son Fordham, who succeeded him after the war, showed as little sense by soon dismissing Sir Barry Jackson, recently installed as director, for reasons to do with Jackson's indecisiveness, his reluctance to engage stars and perhaps the fact that he was homosexual. At roughly the same time the governors of the Old Vic sacked Laurence Olivier and Ralph Richardson from their posts as directors, soon after these two men had brought the company to its pinnacle of achievement. Then they closed down the Old Vic's theatre centre and school run by Glen Byam Shaw, an experimental theatre project supervised by Michel St Denis who had the misfortune to be foreign, and a young people's theatre organized by George Devine. Tyrone Guthrie also retreated from the Old Vic to which he had returned.

At least the closing of these doors meant that the discarded men were available to aid the Memorial Theatre's new director Anthony Quayle in his successful efforts to establish Stratford as a fashionable and successful theatrical resort to which most of the famous players of the day would come. Quayle longed to see his theatre established in London, but the time was not ripe: Peter Hall achieved what Quayle had hoped to do. Miss

Beauman tends, a little unjustly, to dismiss Stratford productions of the 1950s as mere star parades, with incompatible acting styles conflicting with various directorial intentions. In making such an assessment she undervalues what was important. But she is surely correct to condense her account of the last two decades of the RSC's history into less than a hundred pages, since this period has already been subject to attention and analysis. The most recent phase does represent a vindication of a century's endeavour. In the late nineteenth century the radical, romantic Charles Flower conceived the idea of an English theatre dependent upon subsidy, and thus not single-minded in its commercial appeal, based upon the Duke of Meiningen's ensemble company whose work he had seen. His endeavours to build the Memorial Theatre, achieved for £11,000, most of which he contributed himself, inspired national indifference. The metropolitan press sneered at length and the *Daily Telegraph* deplored the very idea of providing Shakespeare for dim-witted country folk. The RSC at the Barbican acknowledges the potency of Flower's vision and Miss Beauman's book establishes him as the unsung hero of our theatre.

This then is a most readable piece of theatrical history, some portions of which are retailed for the first time in our generation. But the achievement is spoiled by the slack and cliché-ridden writing style of the author. "The production was just sufficiently on the edge of two eras to use to the full the aura of repressed Victorian sexuality", or "The *Reverend's* Tragedy was flamboyantly theatrical... and naturalistic-theatrical... the glittering performances central to it was not down, but up", are not untypical examples of her prose. There are also some curious factual errors which suggest the author is not fully at home in the world of arts politics. She misunderstands the complex process by which government funding of the arts is achieved. Equity has no Secretary-General. In common with other Trade Unions it has a General Secretary. Jennie Lee was not Minister for the Arts in 1964. The position did not then exist. The name of Charles Marowitz, the distinguished director and critic is misspelled throughout. Numerous regional theatres did not face "immediate" closure in 1974-75. Harcourt Williams did not "usher in" the great days at the Old Vic, nor did that theatre merely secure the services of stars for "occasional" seasons.

## Said and unsaid

Barbara Wright

NATHALIE SARRAUTE

Pour un oul ou pour un non  
58pp. Paris: Gallimard.  
2 01 026407 6

Once again, in this brilliant, amusing little play, Nathalie Sarraute illuminates the complications and murky depths of human relationships. And, once, again she takes as her starting-point: words. Simple, casual, innocent words.

Her two protagonists in *Pour un ou pour un non* are given no names, they are merely Man 1 and Man 2. They are lifelong friends, but Man 1 is worried because Man 2 has recently seemed to be avoiding him, so he goes and asks him why. Man 2 replies it is for no reason; or at least, for no reason anyone would understand. Man 1, an extremely well-established, successful intellectual, presses him, and the more reluctant Man 2 finally allows himself to be drawn. The breaking point came, he says, when he too had just had a success, albeit a minor one, and he couldn't refrain from mentioning it to his old friend Man 1. The latter's response had been: "C'est bien, ça". More significantly, Man 1 had pronounced these three little words in a particular fashion: "C'est bien... ça". I imagine that Man 2 quite intends us, her audience and

her readers, to greet this "revelation" with the same stupefaction as that evinced by M1. What is there in that to make such a song and dance about? Why read hidden depths into such an innocuous rejoinder? But the rest of her play convinces us of our error.

Three of Mme Sarraute's main themes are craftily exposed and graphically illustrated in this play: her conviction that almost all our relationships are not merely ambivalent but polyvalent; her equal conviction that it is rare for anything we say to be trivial or meaningless, even though words can give only the vaguest impression of what lies beneath them; and above all, her vital vendetta against the sloppy, or even evil, habit we have of only feeling safe when we have given everything a label, when we have imprisoned other people – and ourselves, too – in pigeon-holes, stereotypes, categories, catalogues.

Man 1 considers himself happy in his role as a member of the intelligentsia; Man 2 considers himself equally happy as a member of nothing, as a one-off individual who lives an unambitious life with no desire for a personal image. Man 2 despises Man 1 as a conventional creature whose life-style would still him. Man 1 despises Man 2 as a failure. The play develops from initial shadow-boxing into a bitter, ding-dong battle between their opposing points of view. Man 2 saw implicit condescension in his friend's reaction to his modest

success: "C'est bien... ça". Whereas M1 thought he had intended it as cordial encouragement. In just a few pages the "friend" passes through the most violently conflicting emotions: from anxious concern, to suspicion; on to regret, to sarcasm, anger, affection, jealousy, exasperation, defensiveness, pathos, apprehension, embarrassment.

All this Mme Sarraute achieves in her usual deceptively colloquial and laconic language. She is adept at conveying a profusion of layers of simultaneous meanings and emotions in a minimum of words. Cunningly, interestingly, intensely, dramatically, she presents us with a panorama of the human comedy and invites us to make up our own minds. Her words are like silicon chips: apparently insignificant, but vastly powerful. There is never any rhetoric, but her use of metaphor is of unflinching force. We are always intended to see, and we do see, not merely their poetic but their concrete imagery: a mole burrowing underneath well-kept lawns, soldiers in enemy camps, or massing on frontiers.

Mme Sarraute was asked the perhaps naïve question about her two characters in *Pour un ou pour un non*: "Lequel des deux est le plus gentil?" She replied that she had tried to be fair to them both, but she confessed that she did have her own preference. Anyone at all conversant with her work will be able to make an informed guess.



## Politics Apart

Roy Hattersley's weekly contributions to The Listener magazine won him the 1981 Columnist of the Year Award. Here is a selection of fifty-one of these Endpieces, in which he steps aside from politics to give a witty, entertaining commentary on the world we live in, coupled with fond reflections on his native Yorkshire.

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# Bonds of availability

Rosemary Haughton

JACK DOMINIAN

Marriage, Faith and Love  
279pp. Darton, Longman and Todd.  
£7.50.  
0 232 51548 4

Dr Jack Dominian's work in the area of sexuality and marriage, and marital breakdown in particular, together with the Marriage Research Centre which he founded and still serves, have earned him the gratitude of many people, whether through reading or personal contact, because his approach is essentially that of a healer. The research and experience which he has gathered and the analysis and insight which he provides are placed at the service of hurt and hopeful human lives; this is the background to the detailed and copious collection of data and conclusions to be found in the present volume.

In a sense this is not one but two books, one of which struggles free of the other, for its chief importance does not lie in its accumulation of useful and well-documented information about the socio-cultural, psychological and spiritual aspects of marriage—in all its stages of development, from its basis in infancy and childhood affectivity through to mature years, with the various problems, risks and possibilities of each. All this is valuable, but from somewhere behind it another book begins to emerge, which is about a long-term concern of

the author—the attempt to discover how the Christian notion of marriage can justify itself in the kind of society this book (among hundreds of others) describes. The publisher's description and the author's introduction focus on the search for a definition of the essence of Christian marriage in terms of "availability", and much of the book is taken up with the examination of those psycho-social factors which make it hard for people to be available to each other.

As Dominian stresses, the description of what is basic to Christian marriage has changed radically not once but several times in the centuries of Christian history, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. The changes have been due not only to political and economic pressures reflected by, theologized upon and legislated for by the official Church, but also to deeper cultural-spiritual upheavals occurring in reaction to the political and ecclesiastical strait-jacket on human feeling, and affecting attitudes to relationships, including even married ones eventually, in spite of all that the official moralists could do. It is only fairly recently that Christian thinkers have been willing to notice and acknowledge the fluidity of Christian definitions of the basic realities that make a marriage Christian. Mostly, and quite understandably, the Church has merely blessed the current cultural forms, while attempting (though not always with success or even with much energy) to encourage standards of justice and humanity within them, and exhorting husbands to be gentle and

wives to be submissive. So theologians now have to wrestle rather comically with the fact that what had been assumed to be an unchanging and God-given norm has in fact changed, and that it is now necessary to make theological sense of what is really happening to people spiritually under the heading of marriage. As they do this, however, only a few seem to notice that all through Christian history there has been an underground movement in the area of sexuality, which only marginally affected the official teaching but touched people deeply. One symptom of this was the fact, not often referred to in the history of marriage, that in the Middle Ages and later a large number of "celibate" clergy had female partners to whom they were not married but with whom their relationship was known, accepted and often permanent and fruitful. A network of other such illicit but recognized and long-term sexual relationships wove its way through the legal marital arrangements, and clearly many of these were not only personally but socially acceptable at least within the particular milieu.

This is an example of the peculiar problems facing modern theologians of marriage, who can no longer in honesty be as narrowly selective in their choice of terms of reference as those earlier ones who simply ignored the human significance of such relationships and lumped the whole lot under the heading of "sin". If we are to use "availability" as a category with which to evaluate a Christian relationship we are opening the door to a very different kind of theology. In the area of human

emotions the task is not just a matter of finding a different description for Christian marriage, "covenant" rather than "contract", for instance, and "availability" rather than "obligation"—but of taking into account the whole range of human affectivity as it relates to the potentially fertile man-woman sexual relationship.

Dr Dominian's book is a step in the right direction. His close study of the conditions for a well developed relationship, and of the reasons why so many do not develop well, makes clear the breadth of the basis on which an attempt to articulate the spiritual reality of marriage must build. But this is only a first step, only a door opened. So this "second" book which emerges is perhaps not so much a whole book as an introduction to much more work, and perhaps what it has opened is not so much a door as—to put it crudely—a can of worms, or—to put it poetically—Pandora's box.

Two things already begin to escape from the can: the effect on marital relations of political changes, and of the women's movement. These two subjects do find a respectable place in the study, but it does not really reflect the full impact of either on human lives and emotions, perhaps partly because the couples themselves on whose case histories the research is built are often not fully aware of the influences that are deepest in their lives. The emotional problems seem to be worked out mostly against a background of stable employment, unaffected by fear of war or major political change. Yet the reality of our

lives is an increasing financial uncertainty for nearly everyone, and fluctuating levels of fear about the future of our country and our race. Even the women's magazines (always a good barometer of social weather) reflect a concern with pollution, inflation and the arms race. This is not merely the background to the forming of relationships from childhood on, it is woven right into them. The kind, duration, expectations and limits of relationships are affected, whether negatively by avoidance of the issues, or by the search for alternatives to such a society and its emotional parameters, a search no longer pursued only by the young and footloose, but rapidly assuming socially significant proportions.

Similarly, Jack Dominian's book does not do more than touch the fringes of the effects of the women's movement. (For all its warmth and vision this is very much a man's book.) More needs to be done, but it cannot be done in this way, for the phenomenon which is coming to be referred to as the "emergence of the feminine" changes so much in our thinking and feeling that we are entering a new country entirely. The effect on cultural consciousness, on attitudes, roles, family and social work patterns, on goals, priorities and methodology, whether domestic, social, industrial or political, is beginning to be felt like the tremors that precede an earthquake. When this earthquake is over the landscape will no longer be recognizable; and all our theology, sociology, psychology and history will have to be rewritten.

## THE UNITED STATES

PIERRE SALINGER

America Held Hostage: The Secret Negotiations  
349pp. André Deutsch. £10.95.  
0 233 97456 3

CURIS CRAMER and SIM HARRIS

Hostage  
213pp. John Clare. £6.95  
(paperback, £4.95).  
0 906549 25 6

The 444-day captivity of the American hostages in Tehran in 1979-81 was precipitated by errors of omission on the part of the US government as surely as the recent Falklands war was by those of the British government. In each case both the letter and the spirit of international law was flouted by an unpredictable aggressor; but in each case the complacency and neglect of a major world power led to potentially grave international crises, unspeakable ordeals for its citizens, and avoidable loss of life.

Pierre Salinger's retelling of the Iranian saga, though disappointingly leaden-footed, reminds one more clearly than ever how US intelligence almost wifely failed to foresee the fall of the Shah, and clumsily misread the consequences. President Carter had been warned by the potential hostages themselves that the admission of the exiled Shah to the United States would most likely lead to a siege of the US Embassy in Tehran, yet he chose to admit him for hospital treatment in New York and professed to be surprised by the results.

Just as the administration had foolishly failed to establish relations with the Shah's obvious successor, the Ayatollah Khomeini, while he was living in exile in Paris, so it then proceeded to forbid its representatives to have any dealings with the two Iranians most likely to produce results, Sadegh Ghotbzadeh and Abolhasan Bani-Sadr, the one because he was suspected of being a Communist agent, the other because he was supposedly "too anti-American". It thus effectively cut off all realistic channels of contact, let alone negotiation, with Khomeini's Iran, and was eventually forced to proceed—this is the thrust of Salinger's story—through a curious and unconvincing array of international lawyers, journalists, businessmen and go-brokers.

All this was set against a background, unsurprisingly, of a complete failure by the US government to understand the nature of the Iranian revolution, that is, the mentality and motivations of a revolutionary Islamic republic—as

reflected not just by its leadership, but by dissident elements over whom it could exercise little or no control. It should be said that Iranian understanding of the US constitution found it impossible to believe, for instance, that the President did not have the constitutional power to force the courts to instruct international banks to turn over large amounts of other people's money.

There was a huge culture-gap blocking the way to resolution of the crisis: not simply, as always, between the State Department and the National Security Council, but between a society based on traditional Judeo-Christian ethics and a particularly fanatical version of Islam. (Americans were startled, for instance, when students of Islam were wheeled on to television chat-shows to explain that some of these people might actually want to become martyrs to their national cause.) This was what made the fundamental stumbling-block, America's failure to acknowledge any guilt in past interference in Iran's internal affairs, so acutely provocative. Americans grew to understand and even sympathize with Iranian hatred of the Shah and of his secret police, SAVAK, notoriously linked with the CIA; but many could not understand that these twin hatreds were essentially and logically directed beyond those targets towards the United States itself.

Nor were the Russians exactly helping. There are those who argue that President Carter's inadequate response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan emboldened the Iranians to their subsequent outrages. What is certain is that it suited the USSR for Carter's energies to be expended on yet another foreign policy front, given that his continuing concentration on the Camp David peace process and the SALT II treaty had distracted him from the danger in Iran in the first place. It is not all-American anti-Communist paranoia that has Salinger proclaiming that "working through people inside and outside Iran, the Soviet Union did everything possible to block release of the hostages and inflict maximum humiliation on the United States". The Russians, moreover, were cannily aware of the final and perhaps most signal ingredient of the tragedy, of which Salinger does not make enough: President Carter was running for reelection.

In retrospect, as the time, I believe that Carter's cynical exploitation of the plight of the hostages, to what he thought would prove his own domestic political benefit, considerably worsened their prospects of release. In

the early days of the impasse, he brazenly capitalized on the traditional tendency of any country, but especially of those as unashamed of their patriotism as the Americans, to rally round their leader in a moment of crisis. Unprecedented inflation and unemployment rates were thus forgotten as the nation looked to its leader and boasted him in those all-important and ubiquitous polls.

Senator Edward Kennedy, in any other circumstances a substantial challenger for the Democratic nomination, was thus effectively bound and gagged, and his presidential aspirations cruelly stifled. Such gestures as dimming the lights on the national Christmas tree, and leaving it standing behind the White House throughout their captivity, did much more for Carter's emotional support around the nation than for the hostages' hopes of eventual release. Only at the very end of the campaign proper against Reagan, after falsely raising expectations at so many strategic moments, did Carter find that the issue had begun to back-fire against him. It is little wonder that several of the hostages refused to speak to him when the former President, as he was by then, flew to the US Air Force base at Wiesbaden, to greet them on their way home.

Salinger's account largely ignores all this, partly because he has an apparently unshakable faith in the US presidency *per se* (he was press secretary to President Kennedy in 1960-63) but more because, as ABC Television's bureau chief in Paris, his prime concern is to tell us of his own involvement in the "secret negotiations" for the hostages' release conducted by a French lawyer of his acquaintance, Christian Bourget, a somewhat dubious Argentinian businessman named Hector Villalon and the distinguished Egyptian newspaper editor, Mohammed Helikal. Though a mere sidebar to history, this story makes absorbing reading; we are even, at times, prepared to forgive Salinger his prose style.

Salinger's account of the main events is fairly humdrum, though it is a delight to be reminded that the US Secret Service code-named the Shah "DC 10 screw" (perhaps they, if not Carter, had sensed the danger he represented) and of other moments of farce: Ghotbzadeh spilling his own plans for the Shah to be arrested in Panama by forgetting about time differences and announcing the event before it had happened.

"Historical judgements" concludes Salinger in his epilogue, "are always easier to make in hindsight." He does

not explain how they can be made otherwise. But he then proceeds to reach one with which one must register emphatic agreement. "Did the United States," he asks, "learn a lesson in Iran and is it adjusting some of its concepts of foreign policy to accommodate the necessary change?" The answer to that question is a loud *no!* This summer's events in Washington, though under a different President, prove that what held good (or, perhaps, had) then still does: the US government through a longstanding and chronic failure to establish a settled method of developing and enunciating its foreign policy, thereby fails to develop a policy capable of resolving crises like these. Only when set in the context of a coherent global foreign policy can such crises be effectively managed. Presidential thinking for too long now has consisted rather in exercises of "damage control" in the vacuum left by the absence of a co-ordinated attitude to world events.

The hazards of our modern world can scarcely be better illustrated than by the fate of two BBC TV newsmen who were assigned to travel to Iran to cover the US hostage story. As they stood in the lobby of the Iranian Embassy in London, being refused visas (to their evident relief), armed gunmen burst through the door and took them hostage. It was April 30, 1980, just a few days after the low-point of the hostage saga, the abortive rescue attempt in which eight Americans died. The London siege was to end in an equally dramatic, though smaller-scale, rescue operation, in which no innocent lives were lost. Now the two BBC men (one of whom was released after two days with stomach trouble, the other held for the full six days) have

understandably tried to profit from their ordeal by writing a book about it.

The book opens in the worst prose traditions of the *Sunday Times* Insight team ("Said Mohammed Ali, code name The Fox, looked down at the British Airways Trident stood almost on its tail and forced its way away from the tarmac at Heathrow airport...") It subsequently settles down, but a helping hand is sorely needed to flesh out some of the characters who flit fascinatingly through this narrative, but who by its end have all merged hopelessly into one amorphous Muslim mass.

I am no fan of the SAS, nor indeed of these aspects of the British character which they seem to represent, but one is constantly impressed by their skill at developing a correct understanding of what is going on inside a building under siege. The police, meanwhile, seem to be almost wifely misunderstanding the psychological state of the terrorists. At the end Chris Cramer and Sim Harris are forthright in their conclusions, both from eyewitness evidence and subsequent research; they do not stop far short of accusing the SAS of murder.

It is a great pity the book was not better edited, for one develops enormous fellow-feeling with these twenty-six hostages, especially with Harris (Cramer's post-release "Notes from Outside" peter away into special pleading to expiate his feelings of guilt). It is unusual to have a first-hand account of so appalling an ordeal from someone who is familiar with police tactics and such psychological aspects as the "Stockholm Syndrome", and Harris' cool intelligence impresses. But with a little more expertise what is an absorbing and somewhat harrowing book could have become an important social document from which the political and military authorities, the police and all potential future hostages could have learnt a good deal.

## Words of authority

David Crane

RICHARD K. FENN

Liturgies and Trials: The Secularization of Religious Language  
215pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £12.  
0 631 12765 0

The collapse of the Roman Catholic Church in the last twenty years, the destruction of its liturgy and the dispersal of the faithful have been principally the work of popes, bishops and clerical experts of various kinds, all persuaded, like their Protestant brethren, that they were about the Lord's business. It was rightly seen that the task of changing the face of Western Christendom was best set in hand by the invention of new liturgies, written by well-qualified committees of experts, to replace the patrimony of the ages. Richard K. Fenn's examination in *Liturgies and Trials* of the difference between liturgical and secular language greetsly sharpens our understanding of the process of secularization involved in this outbreak of clerical novelty.

The focus of the book is upon the use of religious language and religious notions in several notable American trials, in particular the case of Karen Ann Quinlan whose family went to court to ask, on religious grounds, that she should be allowed to die, since her life was only being prolonged by extraordinary measures. Thus the confrontation between religious language and the secular language of the court provides Fenn with the matter for his consideration in more general terms of the differences between these two kinds of human speech. The differences are convincingly shown to be profound and, although the book is somewhat repetitive and rather obscurely and inelegantly written, the writer's insight into the relationship between ordinary secular speech and speech about or to God is altogether more penetrating than the understanding normally revealed by forward-looking liturgists whose notion of what is desirable in their new services is derived largely from very superficial thought about the mystery of human language and a rather more marked enthusiasm for the things of man than for the things of God.

The distinction made in *Liturgies and Trials* is between religious words

which are themselves deeds, and secular words which stand at some critical and examinable distance from the deeds they represent:

The difference is between language that constitutes reality by being uttered and language that simply stands for reality. Secularization drives the opening wedge between language and reality.

The central example of religious, liturgical speech is found in the words of consecration at the heart of the Mass, which make present on the altar the Body and Blood of Christ *ex opere operato*, as the direct consequence of the fact that the words are uttered by a priest; and in some less soundly explicit way all liturgical language effects what it signifies. Those who are present in the liturgy of the Church takes place do not enquire whether those who speak the words mean what they say, or whether they are in some way playing a linguistic game, using words theoretically or ironically or deceitfully. This is because the words used do not belong to those who use them, they are not primarily meant to be (to use the language beloved of modern liturgists) spontaneous; sincere, but coming from the heart; rather they are in the first place used because in this circumstance they have always been used—we say these words because our fathers said them—and it is from this sanctified tradition that they derive the authority to be the religious reality they signify. If the words are also spoken sincerely, then that is very much to the personal benefit of the sincere speaker of them, but the sincerity of the speaker adds nothing in the way of authority to a traditional liturgical utterance: it is the case that the liturgy itself confers authority upon the speaker.

Secular words have their being at the moment we speak them because we have chosen that they shall have it; they are to some degree our creatures. New liturgies have their being because a group of modern clergymen have chosen that they shall have it, or sometimes because the parish priest thought it up earnestly last week, or the parish liturgical committee, meaningfully worked through to some form of words and actions that appealed to them, but:

Churches...tamper with liturgies at the peril of leaving unattended the human hunger for an imperishable, utterly true and life-giving language...to revise a liturgy if to

create, in effect, a new one and at the same time to remind the faithful that the connection between language and reality depends upon the scholarly and critical discretion of those with ecoteric and historical knowledge.... The lay worshipper thus becomes a lay critic of the liturgical text during periods of liturgical revision.

Liturgical renewal, then, is a form of secularization, and may be seen to be one aspect of the modern clergyman's insistence upon being of the world. The distinction between secular and religious language is made in somewhat these terms by Fenn, though he is more temperate in his attitude towards liturgical vandals than I feel inclined to be, and indeed preserves a coolly professional and detached stance in his discussion of religious language—which is perhaps what has led him to neglect a further area of consideration. In the secular world, events are vividly present to us that the language used of them is inevitably not generally in the business of "constituting" them. Religious events, by contrast, are known by faith, so that here language has far more work to do, it being the apprehensible dimension of things unseen; but religious truth must not be seen, as perhaps it is in this book, as *terminating* in resonant and authoritative religious language. Beyond such language, the believer must assert the final authority of certain religious events, like the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection. If the Resurrection did not physically and actually occur one day, then all the solemn words about it amount to nothing much.

The process of secularization engaged in by modern religious thinkers may certainly be a movement from resonant and authoritative religious language to secular talk, but it may also move in this same direction from a point further along the continuum, so that we have the spectacle of modern theologians high-mindedly refusing the vulgar assertion that the Resurrection ever actually happened and persuading us instead that what is of religious value about the Resurrection is the resonant and authoritative words that might be spoken about it. We must choose our traditional religious language, but be clear that, along with faith and hope, it is the ladder not the goal. Even so, the man who steals the ladder is rightly hated.

## Classics of creation

J. L. Houlden

DAVID TRACY

The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism  
467pp. SCM. £12.50.  
0 334 01873 0

The position of theology in modern Western culture is perplexing. In many serious accounts of that culture, it will scarcely figure at all. In an intellectual and often in a social perspective, it seems to be a marginal matter, the preoccupation of a small, left-over minority. Yet once a historical dimension is admitted, it looms large and becomes the indispensable tool for understanding modernity itself.

And within its own world, theology shows as much vigour and enterprise as many other subjects, some of which may also seem to be, in our fragmented culture, small and segregated spheres of interest. To take one symptom, the range of most degrees courses in theology is now much wider than it was even twenty or thirty years ago, and they reveal a lively awareness of many neighbouring disciplines. What is more, by the nature of its subject-matter, the reflective or systematic (rather than the merely historical or literary) treatment of theology retains a comprehensive, "queen" of the sciences' character. After all, supposing it is to be about something real, it does treat of "the whole" in a way that is true of no other form of human enquiry.

This sense of a large-scale theological canvas is not commonly found in current English theological writing, but it is prominent in the American scholarship, of which David Tracy's book is a not untypical example. It ranges over a vast field of modern thought in a none too lucid prose but with impressively persistent tread. The author is a Roman Catholic, but a comprehensive ecumenism pervades the work. He sets out to face unflinchingly the bewilderingly rich variety of present Christian theological patterns and the equally wide range of styles of interpretation open to the modern theologian. He rejects both an easy modernism—that resolutely self-chosen choice of one single path—which has characterized most theologians and churches in the past—and the sloppy tolerance which offers no critique or interaction when faced

with the gamut of available options. Instead, his hermeneutical tool is "the analogical imagination"—the readiness to discern similarities (in what one sees as reality, and in the positions taken by others) which will shift and enrich one's own perception. It is an interpretative method based on the frank, even glad, acceptance of diversity in Christian theology. Such an acceptance by no means prevents the individual theologian from adopting his own particular focus. In Tracy's case, the choice falls on the idea of all things as "graced" by God.

Neither the concepts involved in the "analogical imagination" nor the idea of reality as "graced" may appear startlingly original (and the latter seems to leave much of human experience somewhat lightly touched). More striking is the discerning account of the diverse ways in which theology relates to its three "publics": church, academy and society in general. To each it has a different approach, but to all three it has a legitimate right of address. It may seem that strictly church theology, that is, systematic reflection upon the Christian tradition from within (as distinct from both philosophy of religion and the practical application of religious insights in moral and political life), has the hardest job to justify itself as having any role outside the circle of faith. Justification is found by invoking an analogy with art or literature, that is, the idea of the "classic"—a writing, symbol, idea, event or person which, over the years, establishes itself as a fertile ground for creative thought and imagination. Wholly legitimately, religion offers such classics to the public forum, as well as for the circle of the faithful, and invites their consideration as agents for the transformation or enhancement of our lives. For Christian theology, Jesus himself may be seen, in this framework, as the supreme "classic".

The book makes a sustained attempt to place Christian theology on the public stage, with its own proper claims to illuminative experience. It allies this to a full acceptance of the creative nature of Christian tradition as it develops in response to ever changing situations. Of course, it is an approach wholly appropriate to the American scene, where any narrower vision must seem, to the sensitive soul utterly parochial. David Tracy's candour and openness are at refreshing as his style is laboured.

## Alienation effects

John Lahr

MICHAEL LEAPMAN

Yankee Doodles  
250pp. Allen Lane. £7.95.  
0 7139 1453 X

New Yorkers think of themselves as being, in the vulgar parlance of achievement and of suffering, New York is a city of aliens, of the uprooted in search of a destiny. Dispossessed and insatiable, the New Yorker makes a myth of his alienation. As a chronicler of this urban comedy, there can be no better foreign correspondent than Michael Leapman. *Yankee Doodles*, his delightful collection of London *Times* reports from New York, is a very well-written account of life in the USA, that is, the United States of Advertising.

Leapman has just the right qualities to plumb the joys and absurdities of New York life. A bargain hunter, he is minutely elated and horrified by the American plethora of merchandise and temptations. "It is the American way," he writes of the appetite to consume, "like snakes shedding skin, a constant act of self-renewal." And Leapman likes

to eat, so the marvels of franchise restaurants and his mouth-watering description of Kansas City spare-ribs capture something essential in America's pursuit of pleasure. A good sport, Leapman finds himself variously elected vice-president of his gardening club, refereeing his son's soccer match, blind drunk at the Kentucky Derby. "One way of coping with New York," he goes with the flow; and the result is a smart and unsensational look at a complex society.

But Leapman is also a true Brit, a man brought up in a society based on an ethic of scarcity not abundance; and he has a sceptical eye for the American excesses of wealth, power, and work. America is a society bombarded by hyperbole; but Leapman's voice is soft. He goes in search of small moments that reveal the big story of American life. The American impulse to buy one's way out of problems is chronicled in a report about the politics of tipping. The connection between America's reigning passions for sports and free enterprise is made in a piece describing taking his son to a summer soccer camp. In a society where Paramount importance is placed on "winning," sports violence reflects the barbarous nature of everyday life. It is not the public, but the performers who are violent.

"It is about themselves," de Tocqueville wrote, "that Americans are really excited." Leapman pursues this American narcissism with shrewd pieces on American etiquette, self-improvement books and self-assertion courses. The American Dream is not so much a dream of winning, as a fear of not losing. This leads a murderous insecurity to daily life. The tension increases obliquely through these pages—in the violent, hectoring bravado of Watergate felon G. Gordon Liddy on a lecture tour in the fear of the residents of Roosevelt Island, where Leapman lived, that the filming of a "hostage thriller" which used the Roosevelt Island-Manhattan tram, might inspire the restless natives to imitate art.

Leapman, like the New Yorkers he loves, prefers not to dwell too long on the violence. None the less, he ends his book with a piece about an ape, albeit a very intelligent one. The ape in question was finally put out to pasture in Oklahoma after four years in a New York language lab. Leapman quotes the professor who taught the ape as saying that it quickly became the dominant chimp because of its New York experience. "As any New Yorker will tell you," Leapman adds in the final line of this satisfying volume, "if you can make it here, you can make it anywhere."

# The price of ransom

Anthony Holden

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EXT



## Connective crises

Nigel Wheale

BURTON HATLEN (Editor)

George Oppen: Man and Poet  
514pp. National Poetry Foundation,  
305 EM Building, University of  
Maine, Orono, Maine 04469.  
0 915032 53 8

There is a "Peanuts" cartoon in which Charlie Brown says to Lucy, "Go ahead, tell me what I've been saying . . . tell me what you've heard . . . and Lucy replies: 'To, a, of, oh, but, and the . . . Lucy intends to be brusque, but she inadvertently demonstrates how important it is to attend to the smallest connective effects in language. This may stand as a powerful commentary on George Oppen's poetry, and more up, unfortunately, than many of the articles in *George Oppen: Man and Poet*. In an interview with the editor of this collection of essays, Oppen says, "All along I've had a sense that the structure of the sentence closes off the little words. That's where the mysteries are, in the little words. 'The' and 'and' are the greatest mysteries of all." For Oppen the crisis of modern poetry has been a matter of connectives, the syntax, his own poetry has only been arrived at through scrupulous accuracy, both in the formal organization of the poems and in their largest ethical statements.

For this reason Oppen's writing is known to be arduous and noble. The poet's arguments proceed from word

to word and from line to line in a continual crisis, with perception and meaning simultaneously at issue. But the poems offer much more than an intensive local attention: they imply the most wide-ranging political questions.

Burton Hatlen's anthology of twenty-eight articles and two bibliographies, dedicated to the poet and his wife, is intended as "an act of homage" to George Oppen. All but short pieces are published for the first time; the book follows the format of its series, which began with Zukofsky (1979) and Bunting (1980), and will continue with May Sarton, Carlos Williams, Reznikoff and Olson. The editors aim to make available more information and views about poets whom they consider to have been neglected, rather than to give "definitive" assessments. In the present collection this has led to some rather informal editing: many points are repeated from article to article, and weaknesses such as wordy writing and diffuse concepts appear particularly glaring when matched against Oppen's own stringent standards.

The opening section offers a number of political and philosophical contexts for Oppen's poetry. Eric Homburger demonstrates how marginal the first sequence, *Discrete Series* (1934), was to the mainstream of left-wing work during the 1930s; a journal such as *The New Masses* wanted directly propagandist writing or proletarian memoirs, and Oppen's elliptical writings would not do. Yet, despite his obvious distance from crudely socialist

literature, Oppen's poetry clearly emerges as a major political statement, and the essays by John Peck and Rachel Blau DuPlessis are valuable here: Peck writes well about the unselfish nature of Oppen's political intuition. The peculiarly general and impersonal address of the poetry is seen as a vehicle for a powerfully social intelligence. Peck is especially convincing on Oppen's fourth book, *Of Being Numerous* (1968), the title of which exactly indicates how the sequence examines the relations in society between the Many and the One.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis makes a schematic but telling comparison between the ideologies of Pound and Oppen, and the consequences of these for their respective poetics. The essays which try to define the philosophical background are much weaker; the perfunctory use of some concepts from Heidegger does not usefully add to a reading of the poems. One problem is the eclecticism of approach in many articles: important issues about the writing are not clarified where contradictory views are being offered (a poet cannot be simultaneously "materialist" and "mythopoetic", as these readings claim).

The poet's wife Mary contributes a graceful memoir about her life with Oppen in Maine, and this adds physical circumstance to the recurrent images of navigation which we find throughout Oppen's splendid poetry.

## Reading reverently

John Stachniewski

HALLETT SMITH

The Tension of the Lyre: Poetry in Shakespeare's Sonnets  
172pp. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library. \$15.  
0 87328 114 4

This is a gently unprobing book "based upon the conviction that a useful discussion of Shakespeare's sonnets will not make them more complicated than they seem but less so". Seriously undertaken, such a project would be far from the modest one it seems since distrust of the Empsonian delight in multiple meanings (which has influenced recent criticism, including Stephen Booth's essays which try to define the philosophical background are much weaker; the perfunctory use of some concepts from Heidegger does not usefully add to a reading of the poems. One problem is the eclecticism of approach in many articles: important issues about the writing are not clarified where contradictory views are being offered (a poet cannot be simultaneously "materialist" and "mythopoetic", as these readings claim).

Professor Smith is at his best when he is cross-referring between the sonnets and the plays. Even here, though, his significance-threshold can be worryingly low. He tracks through the plays in search of instances where human emotions are related to seasons of the year, although he might as fruitfully have concentrated his search on the thirteenth-century lyric. But one's worries increase when individual poems are scrutinized. Smith remarks, after reprinting Sonnet 131, "It is not a profound poem, so it is rather easily paraphrased", and to the ensuing paraphrase he adds the solitary observation that "black has not remained a colour; it has become synonymous with evil." Since Shakespeare himself has declared, "In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds", the comment (along with the paraphrase) is redundant. The poem is, moreover, more complex than

Smith allows, in, for instance, its simultaneous expression of infatuation and (in the phrase "my dear doing heart") criticism of it. The line, "Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place", may also be resentfully ambiguous, implying that the third of the brain which the judgment should occupy has been usurped by the imagination and that this has skewed the poet's perception of the Dark Lady.

After Smith's evasiveness it is exhilarating to read of Shakespeare's truculent eighteenth-century editor, George Steevens, who felt an "equal measure of disgust and indignation" at Sonnet 20's "falsome panegyric, addressed to a male object". Steevens also detected a botanical inaccuracy in number 54 and proclaimed it as absurd for the poet to assert in 63 that he "With Time's injurious hand crush'd and o'erworm'd" as that a man "was killed and then wounded". Smith (in finding Steevens "more entertaining than enlightening") complains of his "dogged pursuit of logic", opines that he reads poetry as "fourteen-line specimens of prose", and prefers the Victorian writer George Wyndham's response to Shakespeare's botanical blunder as "sheer beauty of diction in Shakespeare's sonnets which has endeared them to poets": Wyndham, he says, "is reading the sonnets as poetry". But this last idea, which, as Smith's subtitle suggests, is his shibboleth, is not easy to grasp. We are told, for example, that "we must be prepared to abandon logic when the occasion requires" but not why or on what occasions. And no theory is advanced as to why we should not, as Steevens did, require retentive exactitude. Reading-the-sonnets-as-poetry is, it seems, to read them through a film of reverence which diminishes the intensity of Shakespeare's homosexual love and the complexity of its humiliating betrayal. The way in which so many paragraphs in this book taper off into paraphrase or glossary makes one crave for some critical engagement, be it only in the form of Steevens's sexual prejudice.

## Scriptural symbols

Andrew Lincoln

LESLIE TANNENBAUM

Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophets  
372pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £17.60.  
0 601 06490 3

For Blake the Bible was a sublime poem "fill'd with imagination and Visions from End to End & not with Moral Virtues". It could only be seen as an instrument of moral virtue if read in its "natural" or literal sense. He once claimed that Voltaire had been commissioned by God to expose the natural Bible, the book of iron. But, exposed or not, it is this version that most of us know.

Our distance from the traditions which shaped Blake's view of scripture has undoubtedly "hindered our understanding of his work. The very centrality of the Bible - the number of interpretative traditions it sustains - presents a formidable problem for the literary scholar who is concerned with questions of influence. Perhaps, this explains a curious anomaly in Blake studies. For although Blake's interest in the Bible coloured practically everything he wrote, his use of this most obvious and familiar source has received less attention than his debt to esoteric sources. Leslie Tannenbaum's study meets an important need, as it provides a comprehensive survey of the biblical tradition that would have been available to Blake, and it tests their relevance in a series of penetrating analyses.

Blake's prophetic book, distinctly less idiosyncratic in the context of the crowded and various field of biblical criticism that Tannenbaum surveys than they do in the context of English

poetry. In the first part of his study, Tannenbaum argues persuasively that Blake's methods are consistent with contemporary theories about the form of Old Testament prophecy and Revelation; that Blake's ideas about the redemptive function of Poetic Genius are related to traditional theories of prophetic language; and that his archetypal symbolism recreates the processes of biblical typology. Tannenbaum's survey also provides the broad historical perspective needed to assess the significance of individual influences such as Boehme and Swedenborg.

In the second part of his study, Tannenbaum applies his extensive knowledge of biblical tradition to six prophetic books of Blake's Lambeth period. The material brought into play is often by its nature hard to digest, and at times, as in *The Song of Los*, Blake is so densely allusive that Tannenbaum's commentary becomes uncomfortably congested with quotations and references. Nevertheless his analyses consistently vindicate his claim that many obscurities in Blake can be clarified by a knowledge of the Bible and biblical criticism. The relationship between Urizen and Los in *The Book of Urizen*, for example, is brilliantly illuminated by Tannenbaum's reference to critical traditions surrounding the two accounts of creation in Genesis.

Occasionally he ties Blake too closely to his sources (it is hard to believe, for example, that the Christian interpretation of the *Song of Songs* "accounts for" the fact that Blake analysed the American Revolution in poetic terms), but generally Tannenbaum's handling of detailed questions of influence is admirably sensitive. He hints that he may produce a second study, focusing on Blake's later prophetic books. I hope he does.

## Salvage operations

J. K. L. Walker

KEITH COLQUHOUN

Fifty Rich  
147pp. John Murray. £7.50.  
0 7195 3950 1

From Fleet Street and its intrigues, which provided the material for his last novel *Goebbels and Gladys*, Keith Colquhoun has now moved on, in his new comedy, to the yet more exotic setting of Hong Kong. East of Suez the corruptions are noticeably less homely than east of Temple Bar. Police extortion in the post-imperial ant-hill is shown to yield a rich harvest in used dollar notes, and no questions asked. Or not, at least, to begin with. The questions, when they do come, are pertinent and the questioners perceptive.

Colquhoun approaches his destination on an oblique flight-path, with an innocent at the controls - a device he used effectively in his earlier novel *St Petersburg Rain* to present the hush of the Kerevsky summer in Petrograd through the eyes of the young Catherine Klin and her friends. *Fifty Rich* (a plain-Jane christening like *Goebbels and Gladys*, Colquhoun or his editor might well have spared his offspring) has the even younger Michael Hawkins as protagonist, a sixth-former at a Sussex public school, who in the middle of the term is called away to the colony to attend his mysterious father in an unspecified emergency.

On arrival, he is met not by his father but by a colleague, the hearty Bruce Blue, who installs him in a small hotel where for a week he is left to his own devices. Michael suspects that his father's troubles are emotional, and that he himself is soon to be equipped with a stepmother. "There would be changes," but they would be concerned with people of a nearly dead generation who should know better: he "would give his father's mistress a peck on the cheek and smell her perfume". At the hotel he finds company in the person of Mrs Wellington, the worldly widow of a one-time China missionary, who provides a shrewd commentary to Michael's reports of his daily explorations: Hong Kong "if it were a person, would be said to be suffering from some mental illness, symptomatic by fits or lurches alternating with bouts of nervous energy".

Blue returns to instal Michael in his father's flat where he continues his solitary life, lunching off shrimp toast and chips at the Cafe Coral, writing his essays on Clive and Curzon, until one morning his father arrives. He, too, is breezily dismissive of Hong Kong: "an unpolluted tropical island, the habit of our time, the people like aborigines, without morality", and China: "in the most appalling muddle, governed by

befuddled old men who hardly know the way to the lavatory". The paternal gift of Emily Poon, a young prostitute, is coolly received, but Michael warms to her after she has taken command in the kitchen and the bedroom. From her he learns that his father is in fact a superintendent in the Hong Kong police, who has blackmailed Emily into looking after his son. Or so it seems. "What," Michael wonders, "were the facts that would stand up to historical analysis on the Braudel model?"

The facts, as they emerge, are unpalatable: Hawkins senior is to stand trial on corruption charges, and has called on his son to help arrange his escape and to smuggle out the millions of dollars of notes kept in suitcases in a bungalow in Cheung Chau. As Michael lifts the lid of one of the suitcases, a slight but distinctive smell was disclosed, mainly no doubt of human soil, moist hands and grubby pockets, but compounded of face powder and other cosmetics that perfume women's purses, splashes from noodle stalls, fish scales, meat stains and probably a trace of urine, for no one allows money to be discarded, whatever adventures may have befallen it. . . . The phrase "fifty rich" came into Michael's mind.

His father goes to trial, and Michael, dismissing the chance offered by Francis, a government employee, of doing a deal, converts part of the hoard into English banknotes and posts them home. "The family deserved a more attractive future. Young Hawkins was planning a different return to England from a distant land, if not in complete triumph, then at least with something, some salvage from his father's wrecked expedition." Two weeks after leaving Hong Kong he is back at school.

Young Hawkins returns from his treasure island considerably more weathered morally than his literary namesake. Family loyalty, transmuted into determination to preserve the comforts of his English life, overrides the shrewd advice of Mrs Wellington not to imperil his future - a triumph, Colquhoun seems to suggest, for the spirit of that other, distant Hawkins of the swinging cat and the Jolly Roger. Despite its corruptions, however, Hong Kong appears agreeable enough - at least as seen through the eyes of the novel's cool young protagonist: an adventurous holiday in a clear, bright setting. As a literary device this works well: the eye is innocent enough to focus clean, fresh images of the setting and characters and to permit Colquhoun to lay out his ironic subtleties for the reader's inspection; but not so naive as to stifle conviction in the surface verisimilitude of the narrative or to render the intrusions of the authorial persona too heavy. The result is a novel that nicely balances a witty and compassionate observation of human foibles with a harshly accurate assessment of the social and human suffering which the foibles grow into more voracious organisms.

## Cataclysm and compromise

Jennifer Uglow

ELISAVETA FEN

Tomorrow We Die  
245pp. Ifracombe:  
Arthur H. Stockwell. £8.50.  
0 7223 1575 9

Elisaveta Fen has been writing since she was a schoolgirl in Russia before the Revolution, but although she has published four novels and three volumes of memoirs since reaching England in the 1920s, she is still best known here as a translator of Chekhov. The connection between her translations and her own fiction is as subtle but clearly discernible one: she too writes of sensitive individuals caught in a round of material wants and ambitions, pressures of work, demands of family and friends, yet haunted by the consciousness of a destiny beyond the confines of daily life. The harrowing of her earlier novels was driven by a sense of her vocation as a musician, and in *Tomorrow We Die* the action is

heightened by the principal character's sensitivity to the mysteries of life and death, the latter symbolized by the Second World War, which threatens and then storms just over the horizon.

The novel describes the reactions and relationships of three "Modern Women". Sylvia, a child therapist, already deeply affected by her childhood in troubled Ireland and by a disastrous marriage, and her two friends, Patricia, a journalist, and Barbara, a surgeon. It is very much a period piece, full of details of life from 1938-45 - the style of hats, wallzies and cocktails, ration cards and "extras", creches, National Restaurants, and blackout curtains and doodle-bugs. It also recreates social manners and attitudes with precision, and sometimes with unexpected force; as in the opening chapters, dominated by the expectation of cataclysmic social change, calling forth reactions we now associate with threats of nuclear holocaust: "I'd hope to be killed in the first air-raid . . . I don't want to survive the next war". In fact the succeeding years, for those "left behind" prove to be a time of attrition rather than direct

## Exclusive familiarities

Dennis Walder

ELSA JOUBERT

To Die At Sunset  
Translated by Kleas Steytler  
141pp. Hodder and Stoughton.  
£5.95.  
0 340 28219 4

*To Die At Sunset* is the English translation (by the author's husband) of an Afrikaans novel, *Ons wag op die Kaptein*, first published in South Africa in 1963. Elsa Joubert has written several books in Afrikaans, but it was her last work, published here in English as *Poppie*, which brought her international recognition. *Poppie* was a remarkable book, a documentary retelling of the life of a Xhosa servant-woman in present-day South Africa.

*To Die At Sunset* has the hallucinatory power of a dream - or nightmare. It is presented from the point of view of a middle-aged white woman on a coffee-plantation in a remote part of Northern Angola during the early 1960s. The woman, Ana-Paula, awakes one morning to discover that the unimaginable has started to take place: the house is silent, the servants have disappeared, and the "insurgents" are coming. Predictably, according to this scenario, the "insurgents" come from outside, from across the river, and are led by a foreigner, a Congolese - "native" blacks are, it is always assumed, unwilling or unable to "rise" against their masters. The whites are herded into a little group to wait fearfully for the arrival of a mysterious and all-powerful captain who will determine their fate (the Afrikaans title means literally "We're waiting for the Captain").

## Beastly bloodlust

David Profumo

JOHN GORDON DAVIS

Fear No Evil  
359pp. Collins. £7.50.  
0 00 22347 3

Several of John Gordon Davis's novels have concerned themselves with human brutality to animals of endangered species, and have been organized around a sharp contrast between gory details of slaughter and dismemberment, and an effusive sentimentalism towards animals and those who seek to protect them. Vital issue though this is, it requires a subtler presentation than Davis seems able to manage, for his books are uneasily poised between mawkishness and propriety. *Fear No Evil* is no exception: it describes the pilgrimage of Davey Jordan, a gifted circus-hand,

There appears to be a Calvinist parable hovering about this idea. A series of flashbacks reveals how Ana-Paula, isolated and frustrated by the constraints of family life in Lisbon, was swept off her feet by the dashing and elegant Carlos, and taken to the exciting, far-away world of the African colonies, there to experience the strange corruptions of colonial life, which shock and humiliate her. In particular, her slowly burgeoning tenderness towards her husband is burnt at the root by the discovery of his secret mistio family. Bitter, obsessed, half-mad, she has come to be hated by all - the mistros, the overseer Pereira and his family, the servants, the farm-workers, only her dog, and her collection of birds offer solace and the memory of a brief, illicit intimacy with a passing commercial traveller. Her husband appears to live entirely absorbed in narcissistic self-contemplation.

Elsa Joubert writes with elegance and insight about her troubled heroine's unhappy experiences. There are weaknesses, such as a tendency towards redundant poeticism; but on the whole the tale is told with accuracy and restraint. Newly arrived in Luanda, Ana-Paula observes a black woman sitting with her back against the wall of a building:

Ana-Paula's glance slowly climbed up the long, graceful neck to the familiar, uneasy face of the Afrikaner that he claims to "know the black" better than anyone else, and hence, implicitly, "what is good for him" (or her), while at the same time simply not admitting the full human reality of black people. Perhaps he cannot afford to listen, to know: after such knowledge, what forgiveness?

nose flat and spreading and the thick lips turning back onto themselves, the berry-brown eyes gazing at the white people with blank curiosity.

What human strangeness, Ana-Paula thought, what immense strangeness, so far removed from herself.

The white woman and the black woman looked at each other; without turning her head the black woman spoke to the person next to her. They laughed . . .

Ana-Paula is "furious" at being made a fool of, as she thinks. The man with her tells the black woman to be quiet, "matter of factly, as if making a statement about the weather".

Ana-Paula never gets beyond this initial response. The white men operate within a special kind of familiarity when dealing with black women, a familiarity which excludes her. But that matter-of-factness, "as if making a statement about the weather", has further overtones, of which the author herself seems unaware. Throughout this book, black people appear as objects - sometimes even, as here, beautiful, if deceptive objects - never individualized, given the needs, hopes and fears that the whites express. Black people are exotic, mysterious, frightening, "like objects moved by an invisible force" - but never, really, human. That privilege is reserved for whites. It is a familiar idiosyncrasy of the Afrikaner that he claims to "know the black" better than anyone else, and hence, implicitly, "what is good for him" (or her), while at the same time simply not admitting the full human reality of black people. Perhaps he cannot afford to listen, to know: after such knowledge, what forgiveness?

Creation Myth) life on earth originated. Elizabeth Johnson becomes his disciple, turning her back on the values of American society, whose gangs of male hunters are seen to be the true beasts of the drama.

This conversion transforms her into one of the book's many stereotypes - "She was going to write a book for the housewives and schoolchildren of the world. It would make them weep and laugh and fall in love with Nature. Then they wouldn't want to lock up animals. In cages any more. Characters with whom we are meant to identify are habitually described by Davis as being on the brink of tears; the good-hearted are frequently subject to scalding in the eyes as a result of indignation or pity.

Unfortunately, the novel preaches its message in a way that is unappealingly insistent; and its anthropomorphic presentation of the animals only serves to trivialize their natural mystique and dignity. Each member of the cast is given a distinct human personality - there's poor old Sally, a hippo whose guts are obstructed by tennis-balls thrown playfully down her throat by visitors to her cage; and good old Rajah, the frustrated bull-elephant; and Sulan the elderly tiger. Only when he avoids this insistence on human parallelism does Davis portray the genuinely fascinating aspects of animal behaviour and survival that his own experiences of wildlife in Africa have taught him;

Interspersed with such fairly-tale passages, though, is a series of horrific descriptions of how these innocent creatures are attacked by their pursuers. Here, Walt Disney gives way to Hemingway, as bullets repeatedly tear into flesh and big game staggers. The hunters' desire to exterminate animals and protectors alike is a combination of bloodlust and casuality that is presented as just one aspect of the human tendency to destruction in general. At times, this is gruesomely effective, but on the whole, Davis's heartfelt beliefs are his own worst enemies: repetition and titillation predominate that any but the most sympathetic reader is left with an impression of a novel that, like his earlier *Leviathan*, is nasty, brutish and long.

## Speaking essays

Brian Martin

JUDITH SCHERRER HERZ and ROBERT K. MARTIN (Editors)

E. M. Forster: Centenary Revaluations  
337pp. Macmillan. £20.  
0 355 29475 0

Most of these revaluations were presented to a conference at Concordia University, Montreal, to mark the centenary of Forster's birth. They have been collected by Judith Scherrer Herz and Robert K. Martin, added to (one or two of the authors could not attend) and published. As with all conference lectures, the listener, and now the reader, should be selective: it is necessary to see what the subject is and who is lecturing. We must obviously attend to G. K. Das on Forster and Hindu mythology, John Beer on "A Passage to India", the French New

Novel and English Romanticism" and Martin's paper "The Patristic Mode in Forster's Fiction: The Longest Journey to Pharos and Pharillon".

Word may have gone round that some new star is rising in the Forsterian firmament. Paul R. Rivenberg might suit the part, and contributes one of the two essays on *Howards End*, "The Role of the Essay-Commentator in *Howards End*". Rivenberg writes amusingly and engagingly. Behind *Howards End* lies the conversational essayist; Forster's essay *London* is the centenary of Forster's birth. They have been collected by Judith Scherrer Herz and Robert K. Martin, added to (one or two of the authors could not attend) and published. As with all conference lectures, the listener, and now the reader, should be selective: it is necessary to see what the subject is and who is lecturing. We must obviously attend to G. K. Das on Forster and Hindu mythology, John Beer on "A Passage to India", the French New

very good kind of prose, but well considered, well thought out. Rivenberg's conclusion is that the novel's commentary is often comparable with the collected essays. With characteristic lightness of touch, he points out that Forster's contact with his reader is direct. He is not like James, "who can filter everything through a central intelligence".

Maurice earns three papers in this collection, and two of them are particularly worth reading. Philip Gardner writes about the evolution of the final version of *Maurice*. His evidence shows, "It is from the 1914 text, as substantially modified by the version typed in final form, 1932", that the published text of *Maurice* derives. Ira Bruce Nadel argues that for Forster *Maurice* was an idyllic "greenwood". He did not live in a country of unrestrained social mores, but in a society which held in general a reactionary and prohibitive attitudes towards homosexuals. *Maurice* might be said to explore the theme of Edward Carpenter's remark that "Eros is a great leveller", though Forster's treatment of it entails considerable psychological complexity. Wilde preferred working-class boys because they were "all body and no soul". The choice was not as simple for Forster as Wilde's witicism would imply.

Molly B. Tinsley's "Muddle et Cetera: Syntax in *A Passage to India*" is another world. Some idea of her concerns and her style are shown when she describes some of Forster's Indian landscape, and when she manages to write, "It is with a last anterior appositive catalogue thought, that Forster reminds us that the moment with God, when the universal equation receives its completing central term, is brief".

Part Four of the book records the discussion of five North American novelists on how the influence of E. M. Forster survives in their writing. This should have been left at the conference table. On the other hand, Frederick P. W. McDowell's "Fresh Woods, and Pastures New: Forster Criticism and Scholarship since 1975" is invaluable for all students of Forster and underlines his "constituting appeal to the intellectual and to the general reader alike".

It appears from the records of this conference that, like most of them, it was a moderate success.

## Dreams denied

Lachlan Mackinnon

DONALD PIZER

Twentieth-Century American Literary Naturalism: An Interpretation  
171pp. Southern Illinois University Press. \$16.95.  
0 8093 1027 9

The 1890s, the 1920s and the late 1940s to the 1950s are, according to Donald Pizer, the three periods in which naturalism has emerged as a dominant strain in American literature. Naturalism offers a kind of basic tragedy, in which "the crushing or blocking of the potential for fineness of mind and spirit" is substituted for the disasters of the noble. As such, it reflects the persistence of the American dream while acknowledging realistically the corruptions and contingencies to which that dream is subject.

Pizer writes here only briefly of the 1890s, concentrating instead on the two later periods through the close

reading of six works, *Studs Lonigan*, *U.S.A.*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Naked and the Dead*, *Lie Down in Darkness* and *The Adventures of Augie March*. His close readings are more enjoyable than most because he is adept at organizing his material argumentatively, and they will draw new readers to their subjects.

This is perhaps most so in the case of Norman Mailer. Pizer's reading of *The Naked and the Dead* treats Mailer with a proper seriousness and respect: it is a great pity that, when he suggests that film and documentary narrative (*The Deer Hunter* and *In Cold Blood*) are his chosen exemplars, he may be taking on naturalistic techniques, the terms of the brief forbid him to go on to deal with *The Executioner's Song*. That powerful and evocatively brutal work is the contemporary masterpiece of naturalism, and deserves this kind of attention. Pizer's book too would have gained from being pursued through to the present, for its historical schematism prevents the readings from communicating adequately with one another, and leaves us with six interpretations rather than the one promised by the subtitle.



